CHRISTIAN UNION

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CHRISTIAN UNION:

A HISTORICAL STUDY

By

J. H. GARRISON, LL. D.,

Editor Christian-Evangelist.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you."—*Paul.*

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DEDICATION:

TO the Memory of Thomas Campbell, the saintly pioneer, who, in an age of religious strife and bitterness, breathed the sweet spirit of peace and catholicity, and who, moved by the Spirit of Christ, lifted a banner of unity which is to-day an ensign of hope to millions of longing souls who are praying for a united Church.

PREFACE

The author of this little volume has no higher ambition in these closing years of his public life than to promote the unity and fellowship of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. If he shall be remembered in after years by those who shall come after him as one who sought to remove prejudice and misunderstanding among the friends of Christ, and to bring them closer together in fraternal fellowship and service, and as one who, in his day, contributed something to the fulfillment of our Lord's prayer for the oneness of his followers, he will not have lived and labored in vain. May He whose beatitude—"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God"—has been an inspiration in all our labors, crown this humble plea for the unity of His disciples with His own divine blessing and benediction!

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INTRODUCTION

The greatest task before the Church is the evangelization and Christianization of the world. The successful accomplishment of this task involves the harmonious co-operation of the various parts of the divided Church. Hence the supreme problem before the Church is such a unification of its sundered parts as will secure the needed co-operation. The chief motive to Christian union is that it is an essential condition to the conversion of the world. Jesus prayed that his disciples might be one, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." This prayer of our Lord defines both the reason for Christian union and the kind of union he desires. The reason is "that the world may believe," and the kind of union prayed for is that which will promote and hasten that end.

At no time in the history of the Church since its divisions have occurred has there been so deep and widespread interest on the subject of Christian union as there is to-day. At no time, therefore, has there been so favorable a time for the re-study of this subject in the light of New Testa-

ment teaching and church history. Bitterness of party spirit has subsided. Narrow prejudices have given way before increasing light and a larger charity. The will of Jesus Christ is more potent in molding the religious thought and life of men to-day than it has been for many generations and centuries. If He, our sovereign Lord and Head of the church, desires his followers to be one, the Church now is ready to pause and ask, reverently and thoughtfully, "In what sense, Master, wouldst thou have us one, and how may it be accomplished?" Believing the time, therefore, to be propitious for such a re-investigation of the subject, we purpose to contribute a series of historical studies on the unity of Christians with the view of aiding in the solution of this problem of our time.

As the modern mind has become accustomed to the historical method of study, it is believed that the subject of Christian union can be seen in the clearest and best light when it is looked at through the perspective of history. It is our plan, therefore, in conducting this investigation, to begin with the beginning of Christianity, and to ascertain, as far as possible, what

kind of Christian union existed and to what causes it owed its existence in the first and successive epochs of church history. We believe that God has been teaching us through these centuries past by the events of history, and especially in these modern times is He speaking to us in the movements of our age in language which can not be misunderstood by those who have eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to understand. We feel sure that any discussion of this great theme that is unillumined and uninfluenced by the providential movements of our time would be inadequate. We shall therefore seek to know the meaning of what God is doing in our day as well as of what He did in days of old.

THE HISTORICAL METHOD.

The student to-day naturally approaches the study of every subject that roots itself back in history by the historical method. This is the well-nigh universal method now in vogue among scholars in their study of the sacred books of the Bible, whether they be classed as conservative or radical. It has seemed to us that the subject of Christian union, which is as old as the Christian

Church, and whose underlying principles are much older, can be seen in its true light only as it is seen in the perspective of history, especially of inspired history. Much of the confusion relating to this question to-day comes, we are bound to think, from viewing it too exclusively as a present-day problem to be solved solely in the light of present conditions. The range of vision is not wide enough, and does not extend back into history far enough, to see the subject in all its bearings. Certainly we can not ignore the present condition of the Church, and the present phase of thought and feeling as relates to Christian union; but it can not fail to be vastly helpful to study how the Church was one in the beginning of its career, the conditions under which it remained one for a period, the causes which subverted that unity, and the influences which have been and are now at work for its restoration. This is what we mean by the historical method of studying this subject.

For the purpose of this study we may divide the whole period of Church History into five great epochs, as follows:

I. The Apostolic Age.

Strictly speaking, this would be the period between the birth of the Christian Church, in about A. D. 30, to the death of the Apostle John, about the year A. D. 100. It will be sufficient for our purpose to let the Apostolic Age embrace the first century.

II. The Post-Apostolic Age.

Again having in mind the purpose of this investigation, this second epoch of Church History, beginning with the second century, may extend to the Council of Nice, in the year 325. The adoption of the Nicene creed marks a distinct epoch in the history of the Church.

III. The Graeco-Roman Age.

This period extends from the Nicene Council to the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, under Martin Luther. This age of the Church, which includes the rise of the papacy, was marked by the first division of the Church—that between the Eastern and Western Churches, better known to modern history as the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches. This division occurred in the year 1054.

IV. The Era of Protestantism.

This epoch of the Church, beginning, of course, with the Lutheran Reformation, continues to the present. But it has undergone a change in its spirit and method which justifies a new designation for the times in which we live.

V. The Period of Reunion.

This era had its beginning in a reaction against divisive tendencies in the Church, and the introduction of influences and formal movements looking toward unity. Roughly speaking, this era began with the nineteenth century, and will end with the fulfillment of Christ's prayer for the unity of his followers. This, we believe, will be followed by another great epoch—that of the triumph of a united Church over the forces of evil, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. But this epoch does not fall within the scope of the present study, save as the sublime end toward which all our efforts for union look, and "toward which the whole creation moves."

This is a rough outline of the plan we are to follow in this study. Each of these

epochs of Church History will be studied in order to find out what lessons it has for us who, in these last days, are seeking to solve the problem of Christian union. Some of these epochs will require more careful study, and will yield better results, so far as our present topic is concerned, than others. But each will be found to contribute something in the way of example, warning or suggestion that will help us to understand more clearly the supreme problem which confronts the Church to-day.

"History," some one has said, "is philosophy teaching by example." Is it not even more than that? If there be a guiding Hand, an overruling Providence, shaping the course of human events, does it not follow that history in the long run is a commentary on the divine purpose? History is a great teacher, but in order to learn the lessons it can teach us we must divest ourselves, as far as possible, of all prejudices and preconceived theories that would prevent us from accepting its facts or the meaning of its facts. In this investigation we plead for an open mind and a love of truth that transcends all our reverence for inherited opinions and traditions.

Two motives impel us to this fresh study of the subject of Christian union. We believe that we who are designated as "Disciples of Christ," or "Christians," and who, together with our fathers, have stood for nearly a century as advocates of Christian union, need to re-study this subject both in the light of the past and of the present that we may renew our zeal in its behalf, and get a clearer grasp of the subject in its relation to the times in which we live, and to the principles for which we stand. Like others, we are not immune from the party spirit, and there is constant danger that we may make the plea of Christian union a mere party slogan, much as a political party sometimes raises a popular cry to catch votes. On the other hand, there is danger that some may grow weary of the slow coming of the desired unity, and may seek to hasten it in a way that would compromise important principles and furnish a new occasion for division. To prevent either of these extremes, it seems to us a fresh study of this whole question is desirable. The other motive is a desire to contribute any light which we may be able to give for the benefit of our brethren in

other religious bodies who, with us, are seeking to solve the problem of unity and to find a closer bond of fellowship that will enable them to co-operate, as members of a common family and citizens of a common kingdom, in spreading the reign of Christ over the earth. Hitherto the ears of these brethren have not been so open to hear anything we had to say on the subject as they are at present. We shall have that larger constituency in view in these studies, and we shall be grateful for any help which we may be able to render our brethren in other religious bodies, who, equally with us, are interested in this subject. Our earnest desire is, and our earnest effort will be, to avoid writing as a partisan, but to write rather as a free member of the body of Christ, claiming fellowship with all Christians, and seeking only to bring them into such relations with Christ and with each other as that the will of God may speedily be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

We are at the dawn of a new era on the subject of Christian unity. Men may shut their eyes to the fact if they will, but the fact exists nevertheless. A new spirit has

entered into the hearts of Christian people, and the Church has caught the sight of a new vision which will henceforth be a controlling factor in its life. Having once seen this fair vision, it can never live and labor contentedly under the limitations of its division walls. It is with the view of hastening the realization on earth of this vision of a united Church, if only in some small degree, that we undertake this work.

It is with a profound sense of our inability to deal adequately with so great and vital a theme, that we undertake the task outlined above. We do so, however, relying confidently upon the gracious aid of that divine and immanent Spirit an important part of whose mission in the Church is to promote its spiritual development and unity.

I

THE APOSTOLIC AGE

"Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us; that the world may believe that thou didst send me." (John 17:20, 21.)

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:35.)

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." (Acts 4:32.)

"Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (I. Cor. 1:12, 13.)

"Wherefore let no one glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (I. Cor. 3:21-23.)

I

THE APOSTOLIC AGE

THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH.

God had a "chosen people" under both the patriarchal and Jewish dispensations among whom there were devout souls who "walked with God" and obeyed His will so far as it was revealed to them. But the institution known as the Church, the Church of God, or the Church of Christ, came into existence on the first Pentecost following the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. This occurred in the city of Jerusalem in about the year A. D. 29 or 30. There was a concurrence of events at this time and place that marked the introduction of a new age, or dispensation.

Fifty days before this event Jesus had been crucified at the time of the Jewish Passover. On the third day afterwards he had risen from the dead. Forty days after his resurrection he remained among his disciples, appearing to them at different times and furnishing them many "infalli-

ble proofs" of his identity and of the reality of his resurrection. He had then ascended to his Father from the Mount of Olives, where, under the brilliant light of the Syrian sun, he was parted from them in the act of blessing them, and was received into heaven. One week later, being the day of Pentecost, he fulfilled his promise to his disciples by sending upon them "the promise of the Father." The week between the ascension of Jesus and the advent of the Holy Spirit seems to have been spent by the disciples in a prayer meeting. (Acts 1:14.)

Being thus gathered together, the Spirit descended upon them, "and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Peter, who seems to have been the chief speaker, explained the phenomena which they were witnessing as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel concerning the pouring out of the Spirit in the last days, and vindicated Jesus as the true Messiah by announcing his resurrection and coronation in heaven. As a result of his preaching and that of the other apostles, three thousand were convicted of sin, and

were baptized in the name of Christ on that day. (Acts 2.)

At that time and in that place came into being what has since been known in history as the Church. It could not have come into existence earlier, because (1) Jesus had not died for our sins according to the Scriptures; (2) had not risen from the dead for our justification; (3) had not ascended into heaven and thus vindicated his claims to the Messiahship; nor (4) had the Holy Spirit been given in his new relation to men, through whom men were to be convicted of sin and made alive to Christ. Besides, this was the time and place for this event, according to the Scriptures. Centuries before Isaiah had prophesied, saying: "And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted among the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he shall teach us of his ways, and we shall walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Je-

rusalem." (See also Micah 4:1, 2.)

Concerning this same event, Jesus had prophesied more specifically when he said to two of his disciples on the way to Emmaus, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, *beginning from Jerusalem*. Ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city, *until ye be clothed with power from on high*." (Luke 24:46-49.) This passage fixes definitely both the *time* and the *place* of the beginning of that great spiritual movement which we call the Church.

There was a time of necessary preparation going before this in the life and personal ministry of Jesus Christ, and in the training of his apostles who were to be the charter members and nucleus of his Church, and ministers plenipotentiary in the proclamation of the Gospel and the terms of salvation. But even these apostles had a vague and inadequate conception of the mission of Jesus and of the nature of his kingdom until they had received the endue-

ment of power from on high. How much less prepared were the others to become spiritual members of the Church made up of regenerated persons! It was not the work of Jesus during his earthly ministry to establish his Church and win men to his spiritual reign by his own personal appeal. That was to be the work of the apostles and others who should come after them. His was a work of preparation—the preparation of the Gospel message and of men who were to declare it. This was why he could say to his disciples, "And greater works than this shall he do [who believes on me] because I go unto my Father." (John 14:12.) His going to the Father by the way of the cross, the sepulcher, the resurrection and the ascension, would complete a message which, when told by men under the power of the Spirit, would enable them to do greater works than any miracle he had wrought. Jesus always taught his disciples to esteem spiritual blessings far beyond any material blessings, even the saving of their physical lives. Hence the moral and spiritual changes to be effected by the Gospel through the preaching of his disciples were in his thought "greater works"

than any physical miracles he had wrought.

Thus came into existence, through the preaching by the apostles of Jesus Christ and him crucified, and through faith in and obedience to him, that Church whose fortunes we are to follow, and the secret of whose unity we are to seek to find. It is important to note the following facts in connection with the beginning of the Church, as they will have an important bearing in our future investigation of this subject:

1. The subject matter of the preaching which produced the faith and conviction of sin, causing the men who heard it to cry out, "Brethren, what shall we do?" was Jesus Christ, crucified, risen again from the dead, ascended into heaven, crowned king, and sending forth his Holy Spirit upon them, through whom he declared the message of life and salvation. In other words, it was the simple facts of the Gospel—a story which later came to be summarized in a single phrase, "the Cross of Christ." There were no theological definitions or philosophical speculations or far-drawn inferences, but the earnest proclamation of well-attested facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth.

2. The power by which these facts were declared, and which used these facts in convicting of sin those who had been the murderers of Jesus, was the Holy Spirit, without whose enduement they were not permitted to begin their work.

3. So clear and convincing was the preaching, and so unmistakable were the directions given to these men that three thousand persons on that same day yielded obedience to the Lord in baptism and were added to the Church.

4. Notice, further, that this Church was a spiritual institution, the Gospel having been preached by men who were "filled with the Spirit," and each individual member, having believed, repented and been baptized unto the remission of sins, received the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38.)

It is not strange to read of such a Church that "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul; and no one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common, and with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4:32, 33.)

AN UNDIVIDED CHURCH.

The fact that stands out in bold significance on the pages of the New Testament is that the Church of the first century was an undivided Church. It had its local assemblies or congregations in different places, as the church at Jerusalem, Antioch, Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, etc., but these were regarded as component parts of the one united Church of God in the world. The term church (*ekklesia*) was used in two senses only, the one local, the other general. "The church of God, which is at Corinth" (1 Cor. 1:2), and the "Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), are instances of the local and general uses of the term. The latter use of the word Church may mean either the *actual* Church, as a whole, or the *ideal* Church.*

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*"We may think of the Church as an 'empiric matter of fact,' i. e., as a collection of individuals, the actual Church, or we may cease to think of the Church as a noun of multitude and regard it as a single individual entity, the *ideal* Church. The second point of view is closely related to the first. If we ask what is in the minds of the writers in this usage we find that ultimately they are thinking not of a single entity, but of a collection of individuals. So when St. Paul says the Church

The important thing to notice is, that there was no prefix or affix to the term "Church," except to denote its *location.* There was nothing to indicate different *kinds* of churches having different creeds and terms of fellowship, for the simple reason that no such churches existed. Whatever may have been their differences of opinion and feeling on many points—and these were very great, as we shall point out later—they regarded themselves, and were so regarded by the apostles, as constituting one Church, or "one body," having "one Spirit" and "one hope," with "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism." (Eph. 4:

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is the 'body' or 'bride' of Christ, he is really expressing, under the figure of a single entity, the Church, the relation in which Christ stands to individual members. There is, however, a real difference between the conception of the actual and ideal Church in two respects: (1) The conception of the actual Church regards it as it really is, i. e., a body of individuals of various degrees of imperfection; while the *ideal* Church is a body whose members represent the ideal of membership, i. e., it is a perfect Church, or at least one free from the negative aspect of evil. (2) The actual Church is composed of the members who are still alive and in the world at time of speaking; while the conception of the ideal Church does not denote a definite number of members at a definite time, but implies a membership independent of time. The latter is in fact an ideal, not an empirical, body."—*Hastings Bible Dictionary, Vol. I., p. 425.*

4, 5.) A member going from any one of the local churches to another, in the apostolic age, would have been welcomed into its fellowship on giving evidence of his membership elsewhere. So far as the location of these churches and the limited methods of communication and transportation made it possible, they were ready to co-operate with each other in furthering the common interests of a common Church. As we have already seen, the multitude of disciples at Jerusalem were "of one heart and one soul," practicing even a community of goods. The Macedonian churches made offerings to relieve the poor saints in Judea.

When one sits down to study the causes which made possible the marvelous success of the Gospel in the first century, in the face of Jewish narrowness and bigotry and Gentile licentiousness and idolatry, he can not fail to see that without the unity which characterized the Church of that age its victories would have been impossible. The very fact that the new religion possessed a unifying power that could bind together in harmony Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, bond and free, gave it a tremen-

dous moral power and momentum which triumphed over all opposition. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world, felt its quickening touch and owned its transforming power. Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth and Rome were in turn shaken to their foundations by the new dynamic of a divine evangel preached by a united Church. Blending hearts in one, breaking down ancient barriers of hatred and prejudice, it had one supreme passion—the extension of Christ's reign over all the habitable world. Passing through fires of persecution undaunted and undismayed, this Gospel of human brotherhood, under the divine Fatherhood, spread throughout the Roman empire and later mounted to the very throne of the Caesars.

Let it be remembered, too, that the Church began its career at a time when deep-seated prejudices and bitter hostility divided the different races and classes of men. The Jew and the Gentile despised each other, while a feeling of bitter hostility existed between the Samaritans and the Jews. And yet, in spite of all these racial and class prejudices and religious feuds, there were gathered together out of

these hostile elements a united Church, whose members were bound together by ties which even death could not sever. What was the secret of its unity? What made the Church of the first century, composed as it was of these diverse elements, a united Church? *Its bond of unity was the personal allegiance of its members to the personal Christ as Saviour and Lord.* Their common faith was faith in him. Their common love was love for him. Their common hope was hope in him. Their common baptism was baptism in his name. Their unity—the unity of the Spirit—was in him. Their union with each other was the direct result of their union with him. He had communicated to them his Spirit. In his life and teaching, in his wonderful works of mercy, in his atoning death and resurrection from the dead, in his ascension to the right hand of God, and coronation as King of kings and Lord of lords, they found all that was necessary to their spiritual life and growth, their triumph over all the forces of evil, and their pledge of immortality. It was no human formulation of doctrines, nor was it any pressure of external authority, that made them one, but

the cohesive power of a mutual love for their divine Lord and for all his disciples. So close was this personal tie between the disciples and their Lord that he suffered with all their sufferings, bore their reproaches and they shared in his life and in all his triumphs.

Such was the unity of the Church in the beginning. We shall see, further on, to what severe tests this unity was put by questions which arose in the apostolic age, and which excited warm discussion and wide differences of opinion.

UNITY OF THE EARLY CHURCH TESTED.

It should be stated that the unity which prevailed in the Church immediately following Pentecost, and for a few years later, was of that simple, naïve kind which flowed naturally out of their first love for each other and for their common Master, and which had not been tried. This divine impulse was sufficient to overcome, for the time at least, the ancient differences and alienations which existed between sects and races, but would the bond of unity be strong enough to hold the Church together

when there should spring up within the Church itself serious differences of opinion touching the very nature and scope of the new religion? It was not long before the unity of the Church in the apostolic age was subjected to such a test.

In less than a score of years, after Christianity had passed beyond Jewish limitations, and Gentile converts had been brought into the Church, a fierce controversy arose concerning the reception of Gentile converts, as to whether they should not be required to submit to circumcision and to keep the law of Moses. Paul, the missionary to the Gentiles, championed the cause of Christian liberty, and held firmly to the position that to impose circumcision on these converts was to nullify the Gospel, while to accept circumcision was to become a debtor to do the whole law and to be severed from Christ. (Gal. 5:1-4.) On the other hand we can well understand how radical and revolutionary it must have seemed to certain Jewish brethren to receive on terms of religious equality those who had never submitted to circumcision and the Jewish law. To them it seemed like trampling under feet the religion of their

fathers, and therefore not to be tolerated. This man Paul, who was receiving Gentile converts into the Church without circumcision and was teaching them that the law of Moses was superseded by the Gospel of Christ, was, in their estimation, an arch heretic whose mouth should be stopped.

It is a sad fact to which history bears abundant testimony that at every great crisis in the Church, when some advance step is to be taken to adjust the forces of righteousness to the demands of the new age, some one whom God has chosen for the purpose must make himself "of no reputation" with a large section of the Church in order to voice God's will to that age. These leaders have had to bear not only the travail of soul which every honest man experiences in breaking away from once cherished opinions, but they have had to endure the opprobrium of their brethren who have not been able to see the truth in its new light and in its wider relations, nor to acknowledge the equal loyalty of those who do see it. Paul may be considered the most conspicuous example of this type of leader in the early Church, though Stephen, the proto-martyr, was before him

in his apprehension of the spiritual nature of Christianity and in sealing his testimony with his blood.

It is easy for us, at this distant age, to underestimate the gravity of that issue. It was a question of far-reaching importance, on the right settlement of which depended the future triumphs of Christianity in the world. It was the beginning of that age-long conflict between Christian liberty and a stolid and narrow conservatism which clings to ideas and customs long after they have ceased to meet the needs of men. The question came to a crisis when "certain men came down [to Antioch] from Judea and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses ye can not be saved." Is it too severe to say that these self-appointed regulators of their brethren were not half so much concerned about saving these Antiochians as they were about saving their traditions? We are not surprised to read that "Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them." The result was that "the brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and

elders about this question." (Acts 15: 1, 2.) There the matter was amicably settled, and settled in favor of Paul's position, with a few concessions to Jewish prejudice which involved no principle, and the observance of certain moral requirements which Paul had not neglected.

Gentile converts need not be circumcised, but they would be asked to "abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood." This was the settlement which "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us"—the apostles and elders.

Thus a great crisis in the Church was safely passed. It was fortunate that the cause of Christian liberty had such an able champion as Paul. It would have been easy to have split the Church in twain on that subject, if the leaders had been less guided by the Holy Spirit, and had been ambitious to be party leaders. It was the spirit of unity, and loyalty to a common Lord, on the part of Paul and Barnabas—the liberal leaders—and Peter and James—the conservative leaders—that brought about this happy settlement and averted a disruption in the Church. It may be ques-

tioned whether a single division in the Church to-day is based on a more important question of difference than that which this conference at Jerusalem settled. What were the principles observed in this settlement?

1. Christian liberty prevailed over the narrower interpretation of God's will and purpose. When has it not done so?

2. But there was no compromise of truth. The will of Christ, as manifested in his word and in the events of that day, was honored and carried out.

3. Love triumphed over partisan feeling, and catholicity over provincialism.

We have spoken of the question of the relation of Gentile Christians to the law as having been settled by the conference at Jerusalem. It was, indeed, a settlement of this question among the leaders of the Church, and probably a majority of the members. If any one supposes, however, that the Judaizing party in Jerusalem accepted this official decision as final, and were silenced by it, he reckons without the record. When was the spirit of faction, or of opinionism, ever submissive to the wisdom and wish of the leaders of the Church, and the majority of its members?

It is clear from the record of this council, as it has been called, that there was opposition to the decision at the time, and notwithstanding the agreement reached between the "pillar" apostles at Jerusalem, Peter, James and John, on the one side, and the heads of the Gentile mission, Paul and Barnabas, on the other, this opposition increased in strength and fury until the party resolved to send out propagandists to visit the Gentile churches and persuade them to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses, if they would not imperil their salvation. Of course this was in direct violation of the decision which had been reached, and of the apostolic rescript conveying this decision to the churches. But no doubt these men justified their course on the ground that it was more important to see that the law of Moses was obeyed than that they should obey a decision issued by men of their own time, and that, too, against their wishes. Besides, did they not have a "Thus saith the Lord" enjoining circumcision and other legal observances?

"For years and years these emissaries of a narrow-minded fanaticism, which believed

itself to be the only genuine Christianity, diffused themselves over all the churches founded by Paul throughout the Gentile world. Their work was not to found churches of their own; they had none of the original pioneer ability of their great rival. Their business was to steal into the Christian communities he had founded and win them to their own narrow views. They haunted Paul's footsteps wherever he went, and for many years were a cause to him of unspeakable pain. They whispered to his converts that his version of the Gospel was not the true one, and that his authority was not to be trusted. Was he one of the twelve apostles? Had he kept company with Christ? They represented themselves as having brought the true form of Christianity from Jerusalem, the sacred headquarters; and they did not scruple to profess that they had been sent from the apostles there. They distorted the very noblest parts of Paul's conduct to their purpose. For instance, his refusal to accept money for his services they imputed to a sense of his own lack of authority; the real apostles always received pay. In the same way they misconstrued his abstinence from marriage.

They were men not without ability for the work they had undertaken; they had smooth, insinuating tongues, they could assume an air of dignity, and they did not stick at trifles."* Nor were the efforts of these men without success. Particularly were the Galatian and Corinthian churches affected by them. The Galatian letter is one of the hot bolts which Paul hurled against his enemies, who, in time, were silenced, but not without making a severe test of the bond of unity which held the early Church together as one body.

Another question soon rose upon the horizon, which was close akin to the one whose disturbing influence we have just seen. Was it right for the Jewish Christians to continue to observe the law of Moses? It is certain that Paul's view of Christianity, if rigidly applied, would have put a stop to all such legal observances. Besides, it was a logical conclusion from the decision in reference to Gentile Christians. There could not be two sets of terms of admission into the Church—one for Jews and another for Gentiles. Paul, how-

*"The Life of St. Paul," by Rev. James Stalker M. A., page 140.

ever, was about the only leader who saw clearly that the law of Moses was superseded by Christianity, and that the believer in Christ was complete in him and needed not to observe the ceremonials of the law. It is certain that the main body of the Jewish converts to Christianity, including perhaps the apostles at Jerusalem, had not yet reached this conception of Christianity. As a matter of fact we know they continued to observe the law for many years after their conversion to Christianity, so that James could say to Paul, on his return from his third missionary tour, as late perhaps as the year A. D. 56, or 57, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who believe: and they are all jealous of the law; and they are informed of thee that thou teachest all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after their customs." For a quarter of a century, therefore, the Jews who believed on Christ had continued to be "jealous of the law." There is no evidence that Paul had ever raised his voice against the custom. The rumor that had reached Jerusalem to that effect

was probably one of the false reports circulated by his enemies to injure his influence. "By one huge blow he had cut himself free from the bigotry of bondage; but he never fell into the bigotry of liberty."

A very important principle of union comes to light in the foregoing facts. There are those, no doubt, who think Paul should have made an issue with his conservative brethren and forced them to abandon their Jewish observances or himself pulled out, with his party, in order to have a "pure" Christian Church. But he deemed it wiser and more in accordance with Christ's spirit not to interfere with the deep-seated prejudices and long-established customs of his Jewish brethren, believing that the growth of the Christian life within them would ultimately remedy the matter. So long as they held to Christ as Lord and Saviour, he felt that they should be recognized as Christians, and that Christ himself would reveal to them the way of the Lord more perfectly. Without this spirit of mutual toleration the Church could not have passed through the apostolic age an undivided Church.

It is equally true that this same spirit of conciliation and mutual recognition of each

other's right to think for themselves is an essential condition of union in our day. The two types of mind represented in the early Church in these controversies are in the Church to-day, have always been, and will always be. If conservative and liberal brethren can not dwell together in the unity of a common faith in spite of differences of opinion, then the cause of union is hopeless, and made so by him who constituted us with different kinds of minds. But he who broke down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles has shown us how to be one in faith and loyalty to him while differing in our apprehension of truth.

UNITY OF THE EARLY CHURCH IMPERILED.

We have seen what a strain was put upon the unity of the Church in the apostolic age by the differences which arose concerning the relation of Christianity to the law of Moses. As the Church spread over a larger territory and included a greater variety of people, other differences of more or less importance developed, of which we can see the evidences in the apostolic letters to the churches. We are not to think of the unity of the Church in that age as consisting of

perfect uniformity of opinion, of methods of worship, or forms of organization. We have but to study the internal history of the Church of that period to know that such was far from being its real condition. In his history of the early Church, Dr. Mosheim says of the Church of the first century:

"The Christian Church was scarcely formed when in different places there started up certain pretended reformers, who, not satisfied with the simplicity of that religion which was taught by the apostles, meditated changes of doctrine and worship, and set up a new religion drawn from their own licentious imaginations. This we learn from the writings of the apostles, and particularly from the epistles of St. Paul, where we find that some were inclined to force the doctrines of Christianity into conformity with the philosophical systems they had adopted, while others were as studious to blend with these doctrines the opinions, customs and traditions of the Jews. Several of these are mentioned by the apostles, such as Hymeneus, Alexander, Philetus, Hermogenes, Demas and Diotrephes; though the four last are to be considered as apostates from the

truth rather than as corrupters of it."*

Among other false doctrines in the apostolic age was Gnosticism, though it developed itself more fully in the post-apostolic age. Reference to this sect and its false teachings may be seen in Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians. Among the false teachers of this period was Simon Magus, whom ancient writers describe as exerting a wide and pernicious influence after the experience recorded in the Acts of Apostles. Menander and Cerenthus are other names mentioned by Mosheim as teachers of false doctrines during the apostolic age. The Pauline epistles have acquainted us with certain questions which arose among the churches in relation to the eating of meat offered to idols and to other idolatrous practices. This class of questions usually arose in churches composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Where no vital principle was involved the Apostle always advised the application of the law of love and the principle of mutual forbearance, and especially that the strong should bear the infirmities of the weak.

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*Mosheim's Church History, pp. 28, 29.

DIVISIONS AT CORINTH.

More serious differences, however, arose in the church at Corinth, where they assumed the form of incipient divisions. The root of these differences seems to have been personal preferences. Most church historians are agreed in associating the rise of these differences with the visit of Apollos, the eloquent Alexandrian Jew, who visited that city. "The immediate occasion of this factional development," says Dr. McGiffert, in his "Apostolic Age," "is not far to seek. It was evidently due to the presence of Apollos, who had come to Corinth not long after Paul's departure from the city, and had labored there for some time" (Acts 18:27). Concerning the local situation there, Paul says (1 Cor. 1:12): "Now this I mean, that each of you sayeth, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." In his "Life of St. Paul" (p. 130) James Stalker describes this factional movement at Corinth as follows: "The body of the members was split up into four theological factions. Some called themselves after Paul himself. These treated the scruples of the weaker brethren

about meats and other things with scorn. Others took the name of Apollonians from Apollos, an eloquent teacher from Alexandria, who visited Corinth between Paul's second and third journeys. These were the philosophical party; they denied the doctrine of the resurrection because it was absurd to suppose that the scattered atoms of the dead body could ever be reunited again. The third party took the name of Peter, or Cephas, as in their Hebrew purism they preferred to call him. These were narrow-minded Jews, who objected to the liberality of Paul's views. The fourth party affected to be above all parties and called themselves simply Christians. Like many despisers of the sects since then who have used the name of Christian in the same way, these were the most bitterly sectarian of all and rejected Paul's authority with malicious scorn."

We can quite well understand how a party animated by a purely sectarian spirit might use the name of Christ to accomplish its factional purpose. Such a thing is not unknown in our day. It may well be questioned, however, whether this statement by Dr. Stalker, which we think is

held by a number of other Bible scholars, is justified by the facts in the case at Corinth. Paul's treatment of the situation does not seem to favor that view. We are inclined, on the whole, to agree with Dr. McGiffert as to the true nature of this alleged fourth party in Corinth. He does not believe there was any fourth party at Corinth. "Had there been," he says, "Paul could hardly have spoken in the unguarded way he does in his epistle to those who were Christ's." After mentioning other objections to the view Dr. McGiffert adds:

"But the decisive argument against the existence of any Christ-party in the Corinthian church is to be found in 1 Cor. 3:22, sq. In that passage, at the close of his discussion of the divisions, and at the very climax of his denunciation of the party spirit, Paul speaks of three parties, but says nothing whatever of the fourth, or Christ-party, which, according to the common theory, was the worst and most dangerous of all. And more than that, he plays directly into the hands of that party, if it existed, by exhorting all the Corinthians to range themselves under the banner of Christ. 'All things are yours,' he cries, 'whether Paul, or

Apollos, or Cephas; . . . all are yours: and ye are Christ's.' In view of these considerations, it is difficult to suppose that there was a fourth faction in Corinth, calling itself by the name of Christ. And indeed, when carefully examined, the passage in which the parties are referred to is seen itself to imply the existence of only three. The words in verse 13, 'Is Christ divided?' indicate that the fault of the Corinthians was not that they were rejecting Christ, and substituting another leader for him, but that they were dividing him. The implication is, that they all regarded themselves as alike under the banner of Christ, but that some were Pauline Christians; some Apollos-Christians; some Cephas-Christians.* It seems clear, therefore, that the fourth term of verse 12 was not, like the first three terms, a party watchword, but that it constituted the cry of other Corinthian disciples who belonged to none of the three factions, and who, disgusted at the display of party spirit, declared against all such divisions and announced their allegiance to Christ alone. With such a course

*Much as in our day we have Lutheran Christians, Calvinist Christians, Wesleyan Christians, etc.

Paul himself must have been in hearty sympathy. It was, in fact, just what he exhorted all the others to do. 'Do not divide Christ,' he says in effect. 'We, Paul and Apollos and Cephas, whom ye are making the leaders of your parties, are only builders; Christ is the one foundation upon whom we all build; we are all Christ's, and ye are all Christ's.' "*

But whatever may have been the cause and nature of these parties in the Corinthian church, there is no evidence that either Peter, Paul, or Apollos were directly responsible for such division. They were simply the occasion of the development of these differences. No doubt they represented different types of mind and each had his own peculiar way of presenting the truth, but they were all loyal to a common Master. These parties never came to an open rupture, though it was perhaps only prevented by the timely and vigorous protest of Paul. These party cries, "I am of Paul;" "I am of Cephas;" "I am of Apollos," however, were prophetic of future divisions which were destined to mar the unity of Christ's Church.

*The Apostolic Age, pp. 296, 297.

"I AM OF CHRIST."

We have already expressed our concurrence in the opinion of Dr. McGiffert that the brethren in Corinth who said, "I am of Christ," did not represent a fourth faction equally partisan with the others, but were making a rational protest against the tendency to divide up into factions designated by certain favorite leaders. The rebuke of Paul—"Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?"—is favorable to that view, as is also the fact that there seems to have been no ground for a fourth faction either in doctrinal divergencies or in personal leadership. Those who claimed Peter as their leader were probably Jewish Christians of the more conservative class, while the more liberal, who treated with perhaps too little respect the scruples of the conservatives, claimed to be followers of Paul. There would be certain to be Greeks, in Corinth, who would be carried away with the eloquence of Apollos, of Alexandria, who, not unnaturally, might have mingled some of the Alexandrian philosophy with the Gospel. These were the three leaders

who, innocently perhaps, or at least, unconsciously, had stirred up this factional feeling. Is it not probable that there were, among the wiser heads and more irenic spirits of the Church, some members who, possessing the gift of knowledge, were able to see that all the saving truth preached by these three leaders came from Christ, and who would protest against these divisions based on partial views, and express their attitude in contrast with that of others by saying, "I am of Christ"?*

But, after all, there is a more important and fundamental question than the above.

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*An interesting question emerges at this point: Supposing that the incipient division at Corinth had ripened into open schism, and that Paulinians, Apollonians, and Cephasites had set up as independent denominations, each having formulated a creed to express its particular views, and the protesting members had stood fast on the common foundation, owning Christ alone as Leader, what would have been the status of this part of the Church occupying the original ground? Of course, the world would have regarded it as one of the four denominations; but in its essential characteristics it would certainly have been different from the three parties mentioned above. Should any body of Christians to-day put themselves wholly upon the original New Testament basis of faith and fellowship, in order to clear themselves of the sin of schism, although they would be popularly regarded as a denomination, being only a part of the general body of Christ, yet their chief distinguishing feature would be their undenominational, or non-partisan, character.

Regardless of the historic question as to whether or not there were, as a matter of fact, a part of the Church at Corinth who occupied the common catholic ground, taking Christ alone as their Leader, was not this the very position that *ought* to have been taken by the Church, and is it not precisely the position which Paul *did* take and which he urged the whole Church to take? That is the real question which vitally concerns us. Even if it were granted that those who said, "I am of Christ," were the worst partisans in the Church, it would not follow that their position was wrong, but only that their spirit was wrong, and we could only regret that there had not been those in the Church in Corinth who, in sincere loyalty to Christ, and with due appreciation of all his faithful ministers, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, would have planted themselves upon the "one foundation" other than which no man can lay, protesting against parceling out his truth among jealous and warring factions.

There seems to be but one possible answer to the question we have raised: There should have been in the Church at Corinth,

if there were not, just such a class of Christians as we have described—Christians who were broad-minded enough to accept the truth no matter by whom spoken, and whose loyalty to Christ's teaching and Christ's Spirit would have led them to stand like a rock against these divisive tendencies. They could not have done this by occupying a partisan position themselves. They could not have said, for instance, "We are of John," and made a successful protest against those claiming to be of Paul, or Peter, or Apollos. They must choose a non-partisan Leader who embodied in himself all the truth preached by all his ministers, and whose name would be honored and respected by all his followers. They should not, of course, have said, "I am of Christ," in any boastful spirit, or in any tone of personal superiority, but in profound humility and gratitude, and with unfeigned sorrow that any of their brethren, who also were "of Christ," really, should be willing to allow that fact to be obscured by placing even an apostle as their leader.

It is not to be supposed for a moment that those who said, "I am of Paul"; or "I am of Apollos"; or "I am of Cephas"; in-

tended thereby to reject Christ. It was not the sin of *rejecting* Christ for which Paul rebuked them, but for *dividing* Christ. They had allowed their zeal for some particular truth, or phase of truth, preached by their favorite leader, to obscure other truths, perhaps no less important, and had made these partial views of truth their rallying centers instead of Christ, and so were torn into factions. They were not only, by this course, producing divisions in the body of Christ, but they were impoverishing their own souls by limiting themselves to the truths preached by their particular leaders. It was this folly of building on the partial truth in the person of Christ's ministers instead of on the whole truth incarnate in Christ, that led Paul to that magnificent outburst of catholicity: "Wherefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours: and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

WAS THE UNITY OF THE EARLY CHURCH "ORGANIC"?

Perhaps there is no one term that has entered into the discussion of Christian union in modern times that has been more confusing than this word "organic." Some of those who labor and pray for the realization of Christ's prayer for the unity of his disciples express themselves as opposed to "organic unity"; while others declare that nothing short of "organic unity" meets the demands of Christ's prayer. It is probable that these two classes of unionists do not differ so much in reality as they do in the meaning they attach to the term, "organic." This is a good place, therefore, to raise the question, Was the unity of the Church in the apostolic age "organic unity"?

When we face the facts of the apostolic age, what we find is a group of local churches having their origin in a common faith, which held them in allegiance to one common Lord. There was no general organization of an external kind of which these several congregations were component parts, as is the case with many of our

modern ecclesiastical organizations. They were united to Christ and to each other by the internal bond of faith in, love for, and personal allegiance to, a common Master whom they acknowledged as Savior and Lord. Their unity was not the result of external authority, for even the apostles, whose influence was no doubt very great, governed not so much by their official authority as by their spiritual character and their intimate knowledge of Christ. "It was the permanent indwelling of the Spirit in the souls of believers, as an illuminating and sanctifying power, that united them in one body."*

If the term "organic," therefore, be used to signify one external ecclesiastical organization, with a central power or earthly head controlling it, it is clear that no such "organic" union existed in the apostolic age. No doubt, if the conditions had been favorable, the local churches of that age would have co-operated to a much larger extent than they did in the furtherance of the common interests of

*History of the Christian Age, by Professor George P. Fisher, p. 19.

the kingdom, but it is not likely that any organization which might have been necessary for such co-operation would have been permitted, during that age, to exercise any legislative authority over the local congregations, or to formulate in any authoritative way a statement of doctrine that would have been binding upon the churches. At any rate, we are safe in saying that no such organization existed.*

"If we wish to speak correctly of 'the Church' as it has historically appeared, with reference to organization, we shall be obliged to define it in a very catholic and comprehensive manner, as including the sum of those organizations which have been formed to serve as organs of Christ, for the expression and promotion of his

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*"The basis of ecclesiastical organization was the equality of believers. 'All ye are brethren.' Instead of a sacerdotal order there was a universal priesthood. * * * Complaints on the part of one disciple against another were to be carried to 'the church,' the body of disciples, with the apostles at their head. His injunctions to the apostles to superintend the flock, and the rites of baptism and the Lord's supper, imply definite association. The synagogue naturally served as a model in the organization of churches. They are even called by that name in the Epistle of James (James 2:2). This was their character at the outset." Professor George P. Fisher, History of the Christian Church, p. 35.

religion. If we accept a definition that applies to some one of these alone, we leave unincluded much of the organized fruit of Christ in the world, and thus do injustice to the facts that we are considering. It does not appear to have been the providential purpose that all Christians should be gathered into one great organization, and it does not seem probable that such a purpose will hereafter be manifested by the fulfillment of it. Organization, helpful as it is, is a very different thing from that inner life of the soul in God in which religion consists, and can not properly be counted as a part of religion. But it certainly is the divine will and pleasure that Christians should be together, united in some practical order for mutual benefit and common service to their Lord. Any company of Christians gathered in his name for this purpose, has the promise of the Master's presence (Matt. 18:20). Any group of Christians that offers itself to Christ is an organ of Christ, through which he may express himself in his own activities. The Church, regarded as the sum of all the actual organizations, has been a powerful help to the Christian purpose in the world. No or-

ganization has promise of perpetuity, apart from its fitness for the Master's use, and Christianity may yet express itself in new forms, if the old prove insufficient or unadapted to its growing needs."*

No candid student of the New Testament will call in question this statement of Dr. Clarke. The idea of the church organization, or church government, as it is often called, assumed a prominence in after years, and has held it to the present time, which it nowhere has in the New Testament. What we find there is a new life, entering into the world through Christ, and organizing itself so as to give expression to its real character, and to extend its principles among men. Life precedes and creates organization, and not *vice versa*. One of the most important steps that can be taken toward Christian unity is the frank recognition of the fact that the New Testament furnishes us no prescribed form of ecclesiastical organization, beyond the local church, and this seems to have been the natural expression of that divine life in men which drew them together in common fellowship and serv-

*An Outline of Christian Theology, by Wm. Newton Clarke, D. D., pp. 381, 382.

ice. When this fact is once clearly grasped all hope of uniting a divided church on the basis of an "historic episcopate," or under the authority of an infallible pope, vanishes as an idle dream. Even if such a union were possible it would not be Christian union; but it is not possible.

But if there were no organic unity in the sense of one ecclesiastical organization embracing all the churches in the apostolic age, in what sense was the Church one, and how can we conceive of it as a divine organism?

The answer to this question is to be found in the fact that Christ's disciples are bound to him by a spiritual tie. The union was spiritual, but manifested itself in many visible ways. The apostles were missionaries, rather than rulers, in the modern sense, and yet their influence was very great, no doubt, in settling controversies and in promoting and maintaining unity among the churches. In spite of the fact, however, that there was no ecclesiastical system with an authoritative head, it remains true, as we have before stated, that the Church of the apostolic age was undivided. It was one

Church. Its unity consisted in the fact that each of the churches making up the one Church of God had the "one Lord, one faith and one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). They had each the same foundation, the same creed, and the same initiatory ordinance. Jesus Christ was their one Leader and Lord; faith in him was the essential, saving faith, and when this living faith manifested itself in the one baptism, the believer was admitted without question into the fellowship of the saved. The faith which united them was, in other words, a personal faith, and not the acceptance of any doctrinal statement. The evidence of this faith was the willingness to confess Christ with the mouth and to surrender to him in the act of baptism, which symbolized in its form the same truth which had been confessed with the mouth. So long as this state of things lasted there could be no such thing as rival sects, rival creeds and rival party leaders. A member in good standing in any one of the churches of the apostolic age would have been readily admitted into any other church, because they all together

made up what Paul called the "body of Christ."

This leads us to the kind of organic unity which did exist, to some degree at least, in the apostolic age, and which exists to a perfect degree in the ideal Church of which Paul speaks. This conception of the Church is presented by Paul more fully in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians. The Church is conceived of as the "body of Christ," while he is its head, and all Christians are regarded as members of that body. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). So completely is Christ identified with his Church in this passage that the term "Christ" seems to be used for the Church in the twelfth verse.

Of course, that is an ideal unity that has never yet been realized, but it is one toward which the Church must continue to approach as it becomes more and more an organ for the complete expression of the

mind and will of Christ, and all its individual members, each according to the measure of his ability, shall fulfill his function in the divine organism. That term *organism* expresses perhaps just what many of us mean when we say we believe in organic union. It is sometimes held that an organism is a divine thing, while organization is human. The use of the two words, however, hardly justifies this broad distinction. "The universe is not a machine, but an organism, with an indwelling principle of life," says Prof. John Fiske, in his "Idea of God." "Christianity stands in organic connection with the Old Testament religion, both being parts of a gradually developing system," says Professor Fisher, in his "Beginnings of Christianity." An organism is defined by the Century Dictionary as: "A body exhibiting organization and organic life; a member of the animal or vegetable kingdom; an individual composed of a number of essential and mutually dependent parts, all of which partake of a common life;" "anything that is organized or organic." It will be seen from these statements and definitions that the meanings of the two terms glide into each other, and

to some extent they seem to have a common meaning. There is this distinction, however: an organism always has life, and all its component parts share in that common life; an organization which may have resulted from life, may exist after the life has departed. The Church, as a divine organism, has manifested its life in a variety of organizations under different conditions, but there is no one external organization that embraces all the component parts of that divine organism which we call the Church, all of whose members share in a common life, even the life of God.

To return, then, to the question with which we began: Was the unity of the early Church organic? we reply:

1. It was not organic in the sense of being one external ecclesiastical organization, for no such organization existed.

2. It was an organic unity only in the sense that the various local churches and individual members were united to Christ and to each other by a common faith and a common life. It was a vital, not a mechanical, union—an organism rather than an organization.

And yet it was a *visible* union, in this,

that all men could *see* by the faith and the practice, the life and the fellowship, of these various churches that they had one common Master, and had partaken of his life and were governed by his will. For the sake of avoiding confusion, it would perhaps be better to discard the term "organic" while we plead for a real, visible and manifested unity, which will show to the world our oneness in our divine Lord.

SUMMING UP RESULTS OF OUR STUDY THUS FAR.

Before we pass on to a brief study of the Post-Apostolic Age, let us pause long enough to gather up some of the principal results of our study of the first century, as respects the unity of the Church of that period.

1. The Church of the Apostolic Age was one and undivided. It existed in numerous local assemblies or churches, some of them widely separated, geographically, but all constituting the one Church of the one living and true God. There were no denominations, in our modern sense of that word, the members of which regarded themselves as belonging to separate and independent

bodies, differing from each other in their bases of fellowship and conditions of membership. A member in good standing in any one local church was, by virtue of that fact, eligible to membership in every other church.

2. The bond of unity in that age was personal faith in and allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. No other faith than this was required as a condition of church membership and fellowship. "What think ye of Christ: whose Son is he?" was the great and decisive question of that age. Whoever confessed him, as Peter did, as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," and was willing to turn away from his sins, was straightway baptized into the name of Christ, and numbered with the saved. This was the simple creed, and this the simple method of initiation. There were only two ordinances—baptism and the Lord's supper—the one commemorating Christ's death for our sins, and the other his burial and resurrection from the dead. Baptism symbolized also the believer's death to sin, and he was henceforth expected to "walk in newness of life." It was in view of these facts that Paul could say, "There is one

body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord; one faith; one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

3. The fruit of this common faith in a common Lord was the love these disciples bore to one another. Jesus had taught them the "new commandment," that they should love each other even as he had loved them. This was the great distinguishing feature of the Christians of that age. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). The apostles repeated the instruction of Jesus in this respect. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," said Paul. "We know that we have passed out of death into life," said John, "because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). Love for one another was connected with faith in Jesus, as constituting the divine requirement of men: "And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, even as he gave us commandment" (1 John 3:23). "Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth

a multitude of sins." said Peter (1 Pet. 4:8). The apostles are frequently spoken of as preserving unity by their official authority; but it is clear that they relied not upon their authority to promote and perpetuate unity, but upon the bond of allegiance to Christ and love for one another. They did indeed serve to preserve unity in the Church of the first century, but it was by refusing to lord it over men's faith and by their wise emphasis upon the things which unite.

4. As to organic unity, the Church was conceived of as a divine organism—the body of Christ—of which he was the living head. All who received life through Christ were regarded as being a part of that divine organism. That was the ideal Church of Paul. There was no one external ecclesiastical organization with grades of officials, from lower to higher, culminating in a supreme earthly head, whether that head be considered a pope, a council or an assembly. The self-governing congregations appointed bishops and deacons to look after their spiritual and temporal needs, and evangelists to carry the good news into the regions beyond, and

that was about all the ecclesiastical machinery of that age. And yet, the union of the Church in that age was a *visible* union. Real, vital union among believers, such as results from vital union with Christ, never fails to *manifest* itself. Love can not be hidden. It does not conceal itself under the form of separation, harsh and unkind criticism, strife and open opposition, and plead an internal, unseen and spiritual love which does not deign to come to the light! Real unity *unites*. It abhors division as nature does a vacuum. It shows itself in mutual counsel, sympathy and co-operation. If one love the Lord with all his heart, can he hate another one who also loves him and is seeking to extend his reign? But if he love his brother, who also loves Christ, will he not unite with him in honoring their common Master by seeking others to love and serve him? The unity of the early Church, in spite of its diversity of opinions, manifested itself in avoiding divisions and in holding steadfastly to the "one Lord, one faith and one baptism." It showed itself in brotherly love (except in the case of certain factious spirits who loved their traditions and personal interests

more than their Lord), and in such co-operation as was possible at that time. It triumphed over the personal preferences and partial views of truth, which said, "I am of Paul," "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and brought all at last to "glory not in men," but in Christ, and to give him the pre-eminence in all things.

We go back to the Apostolic Age not for its types of actual Church or individual Christian life, for except in rare instances these were infantile and imperfect; but we do well to go back to that creative period for its splendid ideals, yet to be realized, and for those inspired and inspiring truths and principles, which, applied to our own times, will give us a united Church and a nobler Christian civilization.

II

THE POST-APOSTOLIC AGE

"According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon." (1 Cor. 3:10.)

"He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter [Petros], and upon this rock [petra] I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:15-18.)

II

THE POST-APOSTOLIC AGE

CHANGES IN POLITY AND DOCTRINE.

When we cross the boundary line of the first century we soon become aware of certain changes which have taken place or which are in the process of taking place in the Church. One of these relates to church government. In the New Testament there are two classes of officers spoken of in the local church, elders or bishops and deacons. Now we find that in each board of elders there is one to whom the term "bishop" is specially applied. He is still, however, only the president of the board of elders and bishop of the local church, but there is now a three fold ministry, instead of a two fold. It is not our purpose here, however, to deal with the question of "the historic episcopate" except in so far as it bears on our general subject of Christian union.

There is no question but that the occasion of this increased emphasis upon

ecclesiastical authority, which is so noticeable in the second and succeeding centuries, is the supposed necessity of having such authority in order to resist the rising heresies and preserve the unity of the Church. Jerome, the great scholar of the fourth century, says: "With the ancients, presbyters were the same as bishops; but gradually all the responsibility was deferred to a single person, *that the thickets of heresy might be rooted out.*" Perhaps the persecutions to which the Church was subjected in the latter part of the first century, and, with varying degrees of intensity, on down to the conversion of Constantine, and his elevation to supreme power and his edict of toleration in the year 312, had the effect of consolidating the Church and concentrating its authority. But whatever may have been the causes producing this increase of external authority in the Church and reliance upon such authority to preserve its unity, the *fact* is unquestionable, and that is our concern at present.

Along with this gradual change in church government, in which authority is concentrated in the hands of bishops, and later in the hands of metropolitan or city

bishops, of whom the bishop of Rome was at first only *primus inter pares,* or chief among equals, because he was bishop of the chief city, there was another change going on destined to have a no less lasting effect on the fortunes of the Church. This related to doctrine. The philosophic bent of the Greek mind found congenial employment in seeking to harmonize the simple but sublime facts and truths of the Gospel with their philosophy. "For a considerable time," as Professor Fisher tells us, "all Christian writings were in the Greek language. The services of the Church, even at Rome, were at first held in that tongue. So far did the Greek influence prevail that not until the beginning of the third century did Latin writings of any importance appear, and even then it is not in Rome, but in one of the provinces in North Africa, that theological works are first composed in this language." The group of writers of this period, known as the Apostolic Fathers, because they were supposed to have known personally some one or more of the apostles, were not thinkers of a high grade. Much of their writings is highly speculative and allegorical. "The ablest writers of this

period," says Professor Fisher, "were the Alexandrian teachers. Alexandria was the seat of a great university, with its large libraries, its learned professors and its throng of inquisitive and active-minded youth. There, in the Jewish philosophy of Philo, Plato's teaching had been blended with the doctrine of Moses and the prophets, and by means of allegory the Old Testament had been made to re-echo with a modified sound the teachings of the Greek schools of thought. In such a community, as Christians multiplied, the instruction of catechumens often required doctrinal explanations much more advanced than were requisite in ordinary churches. Thus the catechetical school developed itself into a theological seminary, where abstruse points of divinity were handled and young men were trained for the clerical office. The Alexandrian theology was the first serious attempt, among those who adhered to the great facts and truths of the Gospel, to adjust the relations of Christian doctrine to reason and philosophy. It was the first attempt to build a bridge between Christianity and the wisdom of the Gentiles."*

*History of the Christian Church, by Prof. Geo. P. Fisher, pp. 71, 72.

Thus in Alexandria began that philosophic handling of "abstruse points of divinity" which gave rise to the Arian controversy and resulted in the formation of the Nicene creed at the council of Nice in the year 325. This adoption of an authoritative creed, other than the simple one of the Apostolic Age, had for its object also, as did the increase of ecclesiastical authority, the refutation of heresies and the preservation of the unity of the Church. The two chief heresies of that time were Ebionitism and Gnosticism, both of which had their beginnings in the Apostolic Age. The Ebionites were descendants of the Judaizing Christians of Paul's day, who continued to hold on to the observances of the Jewish law. Like all narrow sects, they had subdivided among themselves. It is in the very nature of narrowness and bigotry to divide and subdivide, as it is the nature of catholicity and charity to unite and cement together. The whole history of religious thought shows that just as any religious movement anchors itself to the past by holding on to that which has passed away, division sets in, because a part of it, refusing to be bound by the dead past, and

sharing in the living thought and growing life of those who seek to keep in touch with the living Christ, move on in the stream of progress, leaving their fellows behind; and this process repeats itself as long as the sect has vitality enough to beget those who refuse to be shackled.

The Gnostics denied that Christ had come in the flesh; they claimed to be possessed of a *gnosis* or kind of knowledge not accorded to ordinary Christians. With an Oriental dualism they identified evil with matter, much as our "Christian Science" of to-day, and held that between God and man there was a chain of existences called *æons,* which emanated from him and filled up the intervening distance. This sect, too, was divided into several kinds, the differences between which do not concern us in this study. They are mentioned here as showing what the Church of that period had to contend with, and as furnishing the occasion for the increase of ecclesiastical authority and the formation of a doctrinal creed, both of which were deemed necessary to preserve the unity of the Church. But this involves a fundamental change in the very conception of unity,

which no longer consists in allegiance to a common Savior and Lord, but in doctrinal uniformity, or the acceptance of a common creed, and submission to ecclesiastical authority, instead of submission to Christ through faith and to each other through love. The bond of union has become, or is becoming, external instead of internal.

The change which we have just mentioned involved the substitution of an authoritative human creed for the personal Christ as the center of unity, and the Church became credo-centric instead of Christo-centric. The faith of the heart in a personal Savior was subordinated to, if not replaced by, the assent of the intellect to certain doctrinal speculations, in the matter of unity. This change was revolutionary in its effects which unfortunately remain with us to this day. To return to the Christo-centric view of Christianity which prevailed in the Apostolic Age is the task of our time.

RISE OF THE "CATHOLIC" CHURCH.

We have spoken of the change in doctrine and polity which occurred during the second century. But there was another

change, which, in its far-reaching consequences, was not less important than that which pertained to the government of the Church. It was the introduction of the idea and function of the priesthood into the Christian ministry. This idea, suggested it may be by the custom of heathen religions, was supported by examples from the Jewish religion with which Christianity was supposed to have a close affinity. This idea naturally tended to exalt the ministry, and to introduce for the first time the distinction between the "clergy" and the "laity." The idea spread rapidly, increased the power of the bishops and prepared the way for the rise of the "Catholic" church.

Professor Fisher says: "The Church stood forth after the middle of the second century as a distinct body. It claimed to be, in opposition to heretical and schismatical parties, the 'Catholic' church. Membership in this visible church was believed to be necessary to salvation. Within the Church, and not beyond it, the Holy Spirit had his abode. The unity of the Church was secured and cemented by the episcopate—by the bishops viewed as the successors to the apostles. The episcopate, like

the apostolate, in which Peter was the center of unity, was a unit. This idea is developed and insisted on by Cyprian, who was involved in hard contests with dissenting sects."*

It is pertinent to remark, in this connection, that the overture of union based on the "historic episcopate," which was received from the Protestant Episcopal Church, a few years ago, presented a theory of union which does not reach any further back in the history of the church than the second century. It is clear that the union which existed in the apostolic age was not "secured and cemented by the episcopate," but, as we have found in these studies, was secured by faith in, and allegiance to, the Lord Jesus, and was cemented by the mutual love of the members. Being united to Christ by their mutual faith, they found themselves united by a common life and the bond of mutual love. In that age there was "one faith," but there was no attempt at uniformity of opinions and theological deductions, through the formation of an authoritative doctrinal creed. The authority of Christ had not yielded to

*History of the Christian Church, p. 57.

ecclesiastical authority, and the freedom which these early disciples had in Christ had not been surrendered for the sake of conformity to doctrinal standards and for the enhancement of the power of the bishops. Any union, therefore, based on the authority of bishops, considered as successors to the apostles, who have had no successors, and could not have, in their apostolic office, does not go back far enough, and does not rest upon the foundation on which Jesus said he would build his Church. It is, therefore, an impossible basis of union which our Episcopal brethren present, and, while we honor their zeal for the unity of Christ's Church, we never expect to see it accomplished on the basis which they propose, nor on any basis of ecclesiastical authority.

But there are sincere friends of Christian union, who long to see the divisions in the Church of Christ healed and who, while repudiating the idea of effecting such a union on the basis of ecclesiastical authority, cling to the view that there must be the acceptance of a common doctrinal creed in order to a real Christian union. Perhaps no one would venture to say that

any such creed now in existence would serve as a basis on which all Christians could unite, but they are not without hope that such a creed can be formed. Nor can they see how we are going to keep heretics out of the Church without such a doctrinal statement. We might ask whether such statements have served the purpose of keeping heresies and heretics out of the Church—or whether they have not rather had the effect of exciting unprofitable speculations, and producing schisms in the body of Christ. On this point what lesson does the post-apostolic age of the Church teach us?

Does not the student of church history recall the great doctrinal controversies which raged in that period? There was the Arian controversy, relating to the divinity of Christ, to settle which the Council of Nice was called; and following that there was the discussion about the *numerical* unity, or the identity of the three persons of the Trinity as to *substance;* the relation of the divine to the human nature of Jesus, concerning which one party was condemned as heretics; whether Christ really had two natures or only one, as the

Monophysites contended; then there was the "Homoousian" and the "Homoiousian" views, the former that the Son is of the same essence as the Father, the latter that he is of *like* essence, etc., etc., to the end of the long and weary chapter. While the Greeks were thus philosophizing about the doctrine of the person of Christ, the Romans were equally busy speculating about the doctrine of sin. As one follows these heated discussions, notes the bitter feelings, the excommunications, the exiles and the schisms growing out of such controversies over purely speculative questions which do not belong to the substance of the faith, he can but marvel that those who professed to be followers of Jesus could have departed so far from the simplicity of his teaching and the meekness and gentleness of his spirit in so short a period of time.

Such was the result of an effort to secure uniformity of theological opinions, by the formulation of doctrinal statements which were to be binding on the consciences of all within the Church. "Now, these things were our examples to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they

also lusted"—"evil," not in intention but in their results.

So far from being a means of union and fellowship among Christians, the formulation of authoritative doctrinal creeds, as bases of union and communion, has been the one prolific source of division and strife in the Church of God. The formation of such a creed was never left to human wisdom. When the only authoritative creed was confessed by Simon Peter, Jesus said, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven."* Having such a divinely revealed creed on which the Church was originally one, why should we assume to formulate another to serve as the basis of union? Against the publication of doctrinal statements for educational purposes, we say nothing, but against the introduction of new and unauthorized tests of fellowship.

We leave the study of the post-apostolic age, which we have looked into only for its lessons on the subject of Christian union, with these conclusions:

1. Distinguishing, as we must, between that natural and legitimate development in

*Matt. 16:17.

thought and adaptation to existing conditions, and a departure from essential and abiding principles, the Church of the post-apostolic age made a grievous mistake in forsaking the simplicity of the Gospel, both as relates to doctrine and to polity.

2. The plan of maintaining unity in the Church by increase of ecclesiastical authority, or the effort to compel doctrinal uniformity by the formulation of doctrinal creeds, was a departure from Christ's method and proved a failure.

III.

THE GRÆCO-ROMAN PERIOD.

"For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables." (II. Tim. 4:3, 4.)

"Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God." (II. Thess. 2.1-4.)

III.

THE GRÆCO-ROMAN PERIOD.

There is little in this period that bears upon the subject of our study, except in a negative way, and it may be dismissed very briefly. The tendencies toward doctrinal refinement and concentration of ecclesiastical authority reached their culmination in this age of the church. The union which existed was not so much the result of unity as of ecclesiastical despotism. The authoritative doctrinal creed, which men must hold under pain of excommunication from the Church and from heaven, and the decisions of the papal authority in the form of decrees and anathemas, were now relied upon to prevent heresies and schisms. It was all very simple. As long as the Church had one supreme earthly head, whose decision on every question of difference was final, submission to that supreme authority was the sole condition of union. It was as simple as the union of the Apostolic Age, but the difference was the pope had usurped the place of Jesus

Christ, and differences of opinion had been made uniform by authority, instead of being left free to work themselves out in liberty under the law of love.

The first great division in the Church occurred in this period, namely, that between the Eastern and Western, or Greek and Roman Catholic Churches, as they are now known. Differences in doctrine, and rivalry between the sees of Rome and Constantinople, had existed for a long time, but these reached their culmination in the middle of the eleventh century, when the pope of Rome and the patriarch of Constantinople issued bulls excommunicating each other! The line of cleavage was then clearly drawn and remains until this day. Each of these ecclesiastics assumed that he had the authority to excommunicate the other, and their assumptions were about equally well-grounded. The theory of union by authority vested in an earthly head, and uniformity of doctrine by an authoritative creed, had failed, even in an age when religious liberty and the sacred rights of conscience did not receive the emphasis which they have in our day. How idle, then, is the dream of certain advocates of

union who hope to see it realized by submission to ecclesiastical authority, or by conformity to a certain theory of Episcopal ordination! Not less vain is the hope of others that some formulation of doctrines may be made that will serve as a basis of union, on which all believers may unite. History has repeated, over and over, the apostolic statement: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Will this historic division in the Church ever be healed? Will the long conflict between the Roman Pope and the Greek Patriarch end in peace? With God all things are possible. Again, will the broad chasm which separates both the Greek and Roman Churches from Protestant Christendom be bridged over, so that there shall be "one flock and one Shepherd?" Impossible as this may seem to men, it is not beyond the possibilities of divine wisdom and power. Indeed it is not possible to see how Christ's prayer for the unity of all who believe on Him can be fulfilled until all true believers within the bosom of these ancient ecclesiasticisms shall be delivered from their bondage to human authority and

false teaching, and shall find in submission to Christ alone both the unity and the freedom which He alone can give to His enslaved and divided followers. This is the ideal which must be kept before us even while our immediate efforts be the union of Protestants.

Superstition and gross ignorance of the Scriptures prevailed largely in this period. Legalism had so infected the Church that it became a burden to conscience as was manifested in frequent self-imposed austerities in the way of penance. "In the devotional system of the middle ages the celestial hierarchy of angels had an important place. Apparitions of angels were believed to be not infrequent. They were protectors against the demoniacal spirits with which the air was peopled. 'The swarming, busy, indefatigable malignant spirits' claimed the world of man as their own. They assumed grotesque and repulsive forms. Satan was figured as having horns, a tail, and the cloven foot. Connected with this ever-present superstition, the torment of the young and the old, was the belief in magic spells and the efficacy of talismans. The potent reliance of the timid, tempted, and

persecuted soul was in the help and intercession of the saints. These multiplied in number as time advanced. Every church, every village, had its tutelary spirits. The miracles which they were believed to have wrought were numberless."* These things are pertinent here only as showing the baneful results which followed a false theory of unity, which relied on external authority more than on faith, and enlightenment through the knowledge of the Scriptures, and on personal love for and devotion to Christ.

But let no one make the mistake of supposing that there were no true faith in Christ, and no sincere piety and devotion, even in that age of superstition and authority. Even some of the Popes, and many of the bishops, gave wise Christian instruction and admonition to the Church. The Ten Commandments, the Lord's prayer, and the Apostles' Creed were at least made familiar to the people. Some of the purest and noblest examples of a serene faith and deep devotion to God, existed in that period of the Church. Christianity, though corrupted, flowed on like a subterranean

*Prof. Geo. P. Fisher.

stream, hidden from the world by its outward excrescences, but nevertheless sweetening many a life and keeping alive in the world the testimony of God concerning Christ, human sin and the need of salvation through His name. Not a few enlightened minds taught of God, protested against the evils of the times. *The Church of God was not extinct in the world. The gates of hades had not prevailed against it.* It was a corrupt Church, indeed, and an apostate Church, but it was the only Church God had in the world to bear witness to his name and to promulgate his Gospel. If it had been wholly dead, and wholly corrupt, entirely destitute of truth and spiritual life, there could not have issued from it a reformation to bless the world. That reformation we are now to study more particularly to see what lessons it can teach us on the subject of Christian union.

IV.

THE PROTESTANT ERA.

"If ye abide in my word, then are ye my disciples; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. * * * If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:31-36.)

"For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage." (Gal. 5:1.)

"Then came the disciples and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not shall be rooted up." (Matt. 15:12, 13.)

"One is your Master, and all ye are brethren." (Matt. 23:8.)

IV.

THE PROTESTANT ERA.

FROM ECCLESIASTICAL DESPOTISM TO RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

As the darkest hour is said to be just before day, so it proved in this case. In the darkest hour of an apostate church there dawned the morning of a brighter day. There had been intimations of the approaching day for a long time. Here and there a morning star shone out in the darkness and heralded the coming dawn. It is a part of the divine philosophy of things that falsehood and error, reaching a climax of badness, hasten their own downfall. There is an inherent weakness and source of decay in all false and corrupt systems. The moral sentiment of the best men of the world had been rising in revolt against the abuses of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and its corrupt teaching. The spirit of protest was in the air. It needed only a strong personality, imbued with the spirit of reform, to focalize

the best religious sentiment of the times, rally about it the elements of reform which had long been in preparation, to introduce the new era. Then came Luther, who proved to be the virile and inspiring personality needed to concentrate the forces of reform and hurl them with tremendous energy against the abuses and errors, both in doctrine and life, of the corrupt church. His coming was no accident. The reform of which he was the leader was inevitable. It was not born out of due time. Like all God's great movements it came "in the fulness of time"—came because it *had* to come if God's purposes were to be fulfilled in the world.

Protestantism, under Luther's titanic blows, was the dawn of religious liberty after the long night of ecclesiastical despotism. While the iron-hearted reformer refuted many errors in doctrine and denounced with great boldness the moral corruptions which had disgraced the church, his most important contribution to religious reformation was his vigorous assertion of the rights of conscience and the liberty of each believer to think for himself and to act in harmony with his own convictions

of duty, holding himself directly accountable to God, and not to priest, bishop, or pope. True, Luther was not always consistent with this principle of individual liberty in allowing to others the same right which he claimed for himself, but when he had succeeded in breaking off the shackles of Rome and in sowing the seeds of religious liberty in the minds and hearts of the people, no inconsistent act of his could prevent the exercise of the sovereign right of freedom of thought and action of an emancipated people. As often happens, this newly-found liberty was abused. Individualism ran to an extreme. On the sacred altar of liberty unity was sacrificed. Better, a thousand times, religious liberty, with its resulting divisions, than the unity of despotism in which human thought was bound in fetters, and in which corruption prevailed.

But one can but regret that Luther saw no way by which liberty and unity could both be conserved. It is not given to any one man, however, be he ever so great, to compass with his finite mind the whole truth as it is revealed in Jesus Christ. "We know in part, and we proph-

esy in part." Luther never escaped the prevalent idea of the time concerning the union of Church and State. He did not hesitate to use force in carrying forward his reformation. He practiced the shrewdest diplomacy in winning the adhesion of kings and potentates to his cause. He did not object to the Romish creed on the principle that it was a usurpation of authority in binding men where God had left them free, but only on the ground that it contained errors which he believed should be eliminated. He felt it, therefore, perfectly consistent with his reformation to assist in formulating a new creed which in its turn should become a bond of union and a test of fellowship. If only he had been tall enough to see clear over the heads of popes and councils and all the bloody pages of ecclesiastical history, back to the apostolic age, and to urge the kind of union that prevailed in that period, how many confusing chapters of denominational strifes and divisions might have been avoided! But perhaps the world was not ready at that time to return to New Testament Christianity. Other reformers and reformations must come after Luther to prepare

even the lovers of Christ to return to the simplicity and unity of the early Church. But let us not fail to give Luther credit for the great and heroic work which has left its impress upon all subsequent ages. His aim, let us not doubt, was to build the Church in conformity with the Scriptures, to which he constantly made his appeal. It is easy for us, living in the light of a brighter and better day, to see imperfections in the work of the great reformers whom God has used as instruments for the accomplishment of needed reformations in their day. But we do well to remember that we are the "heirs of all the ages," heirs of the religious light and liberty which have come through the self-sacrificing labors and toils of these mighty men of God.

Once the banner of religious liberty was lifted to the breeze and men felt that they could express their convictions without fear of incarceration in prison, or death, all kinds of men began to give expression to all kinds of opinions concerning subjects religious and ecclesiastical, and, strange to say, to urge these opinions and speculations with all the dogmatism and air of infallibility that had marked the utterances

of the popes themselves! The student of ecclesiastical history will recall the various types of anabaptists and anti-pedobaptists which promulgated their peculiar doctrines, and made converts, and the differences which arose between Luther and many of his coadjutors, and a host of theological champions who arose in that time to advocate their respective theories which they regarded as of primary importance. All this, and much else that followed in later years, was the inevitable result of placing the emphasis on the intellectual side of Christianity, and the failure to make the proper distinction between faith and theology. It was all a vain effort to make men think alike on speculative questions which had nothing to do with the life or character of men. With all of Luther's intellectual power, he never saw this distinction, so vital to the unity and welfare of the Church. Nor did he ever see clearly that the State had one realm and the Church another, and that these were to be kept distinct and separate; and that force had no legitimate place in the religion of Him who was "meek and lowly in heart," and whose life and doctrine were directly

opposed to any such method of extending his kingdom.

But, again, we must remind ourselves that it was not given to Luther, nor to the men of his time, to bring the Church all the way from its Babylonish captivity to its ancient and apostolic heritage of freedom and unity. Enough for him and his co-adjutors that, with clear vision and heroic courage, they were able to unchain the Bible, reassert the principle of Christian liberty, and inaugurate a movement which others, in after years, should take up and carry forward to a goal that is not even yet realized. Jesus tells us that the same law prevails in the spiritual realm that we see in operation in the physical world—"First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear."*

OTHER REFORMATIONS.

Following the reformation of Luther, and partly contemporaneous with it, were the reformatory movements of Zwingli, in Switzerland, and of Calvin, in Geneva. These later reformers profited, of course,

*Mark 4:28.

by the labors of Luther, and made a still further advance in several respects toward evangelical doctrine as it is held by the best thought of to-day. They escaped some of the evils and false conceptions which continued to cleave to Luther after his break with the Roman church, but they were both more or less enslaved by the idea that the fagot and the sword were legitimate weapons with which to advance that kingdom of which it was declared by its Founder that it is "not of this world," else would his subjects fight for him. Zwingli apprehended more clearly than Luther the meaning and place of the two ordinances in Christianity, and was more influenced than his great contemporary by the humanistic element growing out of the Renaissance. Calvin was undoubtedly one of the great thinkers of the Church and left an indelible impress both upon its doctrine and polity. His teaching proved to be the most virile and persistent form of Protestant thought springing out of that century. It spread throughout France, was transplanted thence to Scotland through the labors of John Knox, exerted a strong influence in the Reformation in England, took its place

beside Lutheranism even in Germany, was puissant in the redemption of the Netherlands from the persecuting power of Roman Catholicism, and, being transplanted to the New World, has exerted a widespread and commanding influence in the religious thought and life of America. And yet it was not given to John Calvin and his brave coadjutors to grapple successfully with the problem of Christian union. The authoritative doctrinal creed has always held a high place in the religious scheme of the Reformed churches, whether in the Old or the New World, and while the spirit of the times and the growth of religious liberty have made impossible the use of the fagot, the sword, and the prison, to enforce theological uniformity, the creed of Calvin, modified somewhat by the broader and sweeter spirit which now pervades the Church, is still regarded by its adherents as an essential test of doctrinal soundness, and an adequate basis of ecclesiastical life.

The religious movement known in the Old World as Independency, may be considered as a divergence from the Presbyterian movement or that of the Reformed churches under the leadership of John

Calvin, in the matter of church government. It strongly emphasized the independence of the local congregation and the movement has come to be known, especially in this country, as Congregationalism. It had its origin in the Reformation age, and in doctrine it was in the beginning identical with the Reformed churches, that is to say, Calvinistic. In its subsequent development, however, it has greatly modified the doctrine of Calvin, and does not acknowledge the authority of any general creed, holding to the right of each congregation to formulate its own creed. It has laid great emphasis upon education, and the institutions of learning which it has planted are among the foremost in this country, and through these it has exerted a widespread influence, not only upon the thought of the Church, but upon the life of the Nation. While its leading representatives in modern times are favorable to the cause of Christian unity, the movement as such, has never devoted itself to the solution of the problem of unity, though it has been an important factor in preparing the way for such unification.

Before the middle of the eighteenth cen-

tury the Reformation in England sadly needed reforming. When the spirit of formalism, religious apathy and worldliness prevailed to an alarming extent, and the Church was losing its witnessing power to the truth of Christianity, John Wesley, who graduated from Oxford College in the year 1726, soon afterward, in connection with his brother Charles, began those religious associations from which sprang the great, widespread movement known as Methodism. This movement, like that of Luther and Calvin, was an effort to bring the Church into closer conformity with the Scriptures, and to make it more like the Church which the Master had established. It laid especial emphasis upon the spiritual power of Christianity, as an internal force, the direct witness of the Spirit, and holiness of life. It was an emphasis, too, that was greatly needed in those days of spiritual coldness and formality, and the necessity for it has not ceased in our own day. It, too, was transplanted into the New World and has been a mighty factor in the religious life of this country. But great and important as was the work of Wesley, and of the movement to which his labors

gave birth, it was not given to him to closely grapple with the problem of Christian unity. His mission lay in another field, but it was performing an important preparatory work in its promotion of vital godliness. John Wesley was less a theological genius than he was a great practical organizer and Christian statesman, dealing with practical problems of administration and the utilization of religious forces. His deep religious experience, and the emphasis he gave to the truth that Christianity must bear witness to itself in the individual heart and life, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, together with the other qualities mentioned, made him a mighty factor in the religious life of the world, since his time.

We need not enter here into the mooted question of the origin of that splendid body of Christian people known as Baptists, whose American origin, at least, dates back to the days of Roger Williams. We have already seen that back in the days of Luther, and no doubt long before his day, there were those who stood for believers' baptism, for liberty of conscience, and against the usurpations of authority over individual liberty by either the Church or

State. No doubt these views were firmly held, and quietly spread among the people, though they had little opportunity of flourishing under the rule of the State Church in the Old World, when dissenters were regarded as traitors. No one man stands for this movement, but it has had a succession of great leaders, both in Europe and America, and has been a mighty bulwark through the centuries for religious liberty, for a regenerated church membership, for believers' baptism, and for congregational autonomy.

It is unnecessary to deal with the subdivisions, which unfortunately have broken up these several Protestant bodies into separate parties and denominations, between which there has existed often a more bitter feeling than between more remotely separated bodies. Enough has been said to show that the era of Protestantism has unfortunately been an era of division and subdivision. It should be borne in mind, however, that the leading Protestant movements came into existence as protests against the tyranny and corruptions of an apostate Church and are the results of sincere and earnest efforts to establish a

purer faith and doctrine, and to correct existing abuses. This fact is sometimes overlooked when these movements for religious reform are characterized as the "daughters of the Mother of Harlots." This characterization of the great Protestant bodies of our time ignores history and fact in the interest of partisan zeal. Men and women of heroic faith and courage went to the stake, to the guillotine and to the flames because of their loyalty to Jesus Christ, and their zeal in behalf of religious reform. Heroes like Wickliffe, Huss, Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Calvin, Wesley and a great host whose names are less known to fame, but whose faith and devotion to God were not less true, have lived, and wrought, and suffered persecution, and many of them death, in behalf of religious freedom and a truer faith, and we to-day have entered into the inheritance which they have left us. It is a species of ingratitude, of which no Christian ought to be guilty, to disregard the labors and sacrifices of these heroes of faith whose names are recorded in the Book of Life. It is to be false to history and to fact to speak of these great Protestant movements, born out of the

travail of soul of mighty men of God, seeking to purify the Church in doctrine and life, as "daughters of the Mother of Harlots."

Had there been no Luther there probably would have been no Calvin, and had there been no Luther and Calvin there would have been no John Knox or John Wesley. And had it not been for this illustrious line of reformers, consecrating their genius, their talent, their lives, to the cause of religious reformation, there had been no reformation of the nineteenth century, led by such men as the Campbells, and Stone, and followed by a long and saintly line of heroes and heroines willing to sacrifice all for the sake of Christ and his truth. We shall never recognize our own religious movement in its true relation to others which have preceded it until we see these others in their true historic setting, and are able to recognize our infinite indebtedness to them for what they accomplished in behalf of religious freedom and truth. It will mark a distinct gain in historical knowledge and in Christian spirit and humility, when we shall cease to speak of our fellow-laborers in behalf of Christian re-

form as mere "sects" with all the opprobrium attaching to the New Testament use of the term, as some do, while we claim for ourselves the right and title of Churches of Christ. This manifestation of high churchism does not look any better when it crops out among us than it does when it is set forth by the older and more aristocratic bodies which claim a direct succession from the apostles. Such exclusiveness is not only contrary to the free spirit of our time, but it is out of harmony with the spirit and teaching of him whose disciples we claim to be. One of the objects of this series of studies will have been accomplished if it shall help us all to a point of view that will enable us to see our true relation to other religious movements, and to have in consequence a better appreciation of the great work to which God has called us.

Not one of these movements, however, as we have seen, confronted the problem of a divided Church, nor did one of them set itself the task of seeking a basis of unity upon which all could stand together in a common fellowship, even as our Master prayed. Each of them saw evils to be

remedied and errors to be corrected, and set itself to the work of reformation, and each of them, let it be said in truth and justice, has made a distinct contribution to the return of the Church from its Romish captivity to its original purity and conformity to Scriptural rule. There were other problems to be solved before that of Christian unity could be taken up,and with these the Lutheran, Calvinian and Wesleyan Reformations concerned themselves.

POST-REFORMATION ADVOCATES OF UNION.

It must not be supposed that, in the spirit of controversy and contention which followed the Reformation of the sixteenth century and other later reformatory movements, there were no voices lifted in behalf of unity. The wonder is that, Christian unity being so imbedded in the very spirit and aim of Christianity, these voices were not more numerous and did not meet with a readier response from the Church. Our space will permit us to mention only a few of the most prominent and pronounced advocates of union in post-reformation times, and for most of the facts herein stated we

are indebted to a lecture by the Rev. John F. Hurst, D. D., LL. D., Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, on "The Irenic Movements Since the Reformation," which forms a chapter in a book entitled "Church Unity."*

Melanchthon, who was the one irenic spirit of the Reformation, seems to have transmitted some of his spirit as well as his theology to George Calixtus, professor in the University of Halmstadt, who became the earliest apostle of Christian union. Himself a Lutheran, by his travels and mingling with other Protestants, he attained to a breadth of view not shared by many religious teachers of his time. His aim was to bring about union between the Lutheran and Reformed Churches. He contended that the points on which they differed were insignificant as compared with the great fundamentals on which they were agreed. Of course he was denounced and ridiculed by the sectarians of his time, some of whom identified him with the number of the beast in the Apocalypse. As our historian remarks, "It was a militant age,

*Scribners Sons, New York.

and the peacemaker's role was not popular."

The theological school of Frankfort-on-the-Oder, was a center of a movement in behalf of peace and unity. We are indebted to this Frankfort group of peace advocates for giving publicity as to the now familiar statement of Rupertus Meldenius: "In necessary things unity, in things indifferent liberty, in all charity." Richard Baxter, himself an advocate of Christian union in his time, had also quoted this sentence in his work on Christian union. Bishop Hurst says that "John Durie was the greatest peacemaker of the seventeenth century." Durie devoted himself with singleness of aim to bringing about the union of Christians. He interceded with kings and parliaments, receiving aid from them and from many of the leading spirits of his time, in his work. Some of the principles which he advocated, as given in the lecture referred to, are as follows:

"(1) A full body of practical divinity, which, instead of the ordinary philosophical jangling school divinity, might be proposed to all those who seeke the truth which is after godlinesse.

"(2) To abolish the names of parties, as

presbyterial, prelatical, congregational, etc., and to be called Reformed Christians of England, Scotland, France, Germany, etc.

"(3) To discountenance controversial writings by private persons.

"(4) It is the mind of Christ that his servants in all matters merely circumstantial! by him not determined should be left free to follow their own light, as it may be offered, or arise unto them, from the general rules of edification and not constrained by an implicit faith to follow the dictates of other men."

It is interesting to notice the striking similarity of some of these statements with the principles enunciated in "The Declaration and Address" of Thomas Campbell, early in the nineteenth century. It was too early, however, for these principles to meet with any general acceptance, and this earnest advocate of Christian union died in 1680 without seeing his hopes realized.

Hugo Grotius, a contemporary of Calixtus, was also an advocate of union, but his aim especially was to reconcile Protestants to the mother Church, and he probably would have sacrificed truth for the sake of unity.

John Owen who has been called "the

greatest of the Puritan divines, the Nestor of the Congregationalists," gave his voice for union and laid down a liberal platform. Among some of the noble sentences are the following: "Wherever there is a man, or a body of men, who are united to him by a living faith and are keeping his commandments, he or they are in communion with the Church of God." "He belongs to the Church catholic who is united to Christ by the spirit, and none other." As to the method of union he stated this truth which is, perhaps, more obvious now after the experience of centuries than when he uttered it: "But I verily believe that when God shall accomplish it (union), it will be the *effect* of love and not the *cause* of love."

We have already referred to Baxter as an advocate of Christian union. We can not refrain from quoting here his noble appeal to the Christians of his day in behalf of union:

"Why, sirs, have not Independents, Presbyterians, Episcopal, etc., one God, one Christ, one Spirit, one Creed, one Scripture, one hope of everlasting life? Are our disagreements so great that we may not live together in love, and close in fraternal union and unity? Are

we not of one religion? Do we differ in fundamentals or substantials? Will our conscience worry us? Will not posterity curse us if by our divisions we betray the gospel into the hands of the enemies? And if by our mutual envyings and jealousies and perverse zeal for our several conceits, we should keep open the breach for all heresies and wickedness to enter, and make a prey for our own poor people's souls; Brethren, you see other bonds are loosed; Satan will make his advantage of these daises of licentiousness. Let us straighten the bond of Christian unity and love, and help each other against the powers of hell, and join our forces against one common enemy."

In 1836 Abraham Van Dyke, Esq., published a book entitled, Christian Union; or an Argument for the Abolition of Sects," which provoked opposition from leaders in the Episcopal Church, and also in the Presbyterian Church. The book and the discussion it provoked was a contribution to the cause of Christian unity.

We need only refer to the local union movements within certain denominational families which are recent enough to be familiar to our readers. The union effected

in Scotland and among the Methodist Churches of Canada and Presbyterian Churches of this country and other movements of the same character which are now in process of being accomplished, are sufficient to show us that a new spirit has entered into the Church, and that the centripetal forces are overcoming the centrifugal. The movement of Abner Jones in New England and of John O'Kelly in the South, about the beginning of the last century, seeking to promote a closer union among Christians, together with the movements of Stone and the Campbells to be hereafter noticed more fully, and of which Bishop Hurst does not seem to have heard, were but parts of a wide-spread cosmic movement toward union which we can not doubt is the product of the Spirit of God within the hearts of His people. All of these movements contributed something to the end they sought to accomplish and helped to prepare the way for the fuller realization of the ideal which they had before them. But they were in the main individual movements, and partly because of the times in which these men lived, and the conditions under which they wrought, and,

partly because of the impracticable character of their respective platforms of unity, they affected but slightly the religious thought and life of their day. We are now to consider a movement in behalf of union whose growth has been one of the most striking phenomena in modern religious history, and whose plea for unity has profoundly affected the thought and feeling of the present time.

V.

THE PERIOD OF REUNION.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32.)

"For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (I. Cor. 3:11.)

"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all." (Eph. 4:1-6.)

"Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. 4:13.)

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit." (I. Cor. 12:12, 13.)

V.

THE PERIOD OF REUNION.

A SEED-TRUTH TAKING ROOT.

With the dawning of the nineteenth century there began to appear evidences of a reaction against the spirit of division, and of the incoming of a period of reunion in the Protestant era. It was within the first decade of that century that, for the first time in the history of the world, there was a distinct, organized movement, having for its aim the unity of the Church. Prophetic voices had, indeed, been heard here and there, for centuries, decrying the evils of division, and sounding some true note of catholicity, but these were drowned in the discord of contending factions. Such a voice was that of Rupertus Meldenius, who, during the fierce dogmatic controversies and the horrors of the Thirty Years' War, "whispered to future generations the watchword of Christian peacemakers, which was unheard in a century of intolerance, forgotten in a century of indifference, but resounds with increased force in

a century of revival and reunion: 'In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.' "* The tract containing this remarkable statement is believed to have appeared in the year 1627 or 1628. Fifty years later, Richard Baxter quoted it from another author in the preface to his work on "The True and Only Way of Concord of all the Christian Churches."

"Here, then, is an admirable illustration of the indestructible vitality of an important truth, which not only persists in living through centuries of opposition and neglect, but which manifests increased power over each succeeding generation. How few there were to recognize in this statement the germ of a great religious reformation, when it was first formulated and uttered by Meldenius! In Baxter's day it attracted more attention as offering relief from the interminable strifes and divisions with which all pious, truth-loving souls were weary. But it was not until more than a century later that it gained practical recognition in an organized movement having for its end the unity and peace of the church.

*Philip Schaff, Ecclesiastical History, Vol. vi., p. 650.

"Indeed, it is quite certain that neither Meldenius nor Baxter perceived all that was involved in this memorable motto. What they did see, evidently, was an utter lack of discrimination, in the popular mind, between the things which are vital and those which are incidental, and the consequent effort to enforce uniformity at the expense of unity. As a remedy for this state of things they proposed the foregoing statement which had in it the seed of a reformation yet to be. But the seed must wait for genial soil and favorable surroundings. If either of the men named, or any of the theologians of that period who accepted this motto, had been asked to state more specifically what were the 'things essential,' and what the 'things non-essential,' their answer, doubtless, would have borne the marks and the limitations of the religious thought of their times. It was for another age to develop, more clearly than was possible at that time, the right application of this principle to the religious problems upon which Christendom had divided into hostile camps."*

*Introduction by J. H. Garrison to "Origin of the Disciples of Christ," by G. W. Longan, p. 6.

Early in the beginning of the last century there were heard at different places in the United States, voices crying in the wilderness of our denominationalism, protesting against the evils of divisions, and calling upon the Church to close up its divided ranks in harmony with the prayer of our Lord. One of these was Barton W. Stone, who, in a great revival at Cane Ridge, Ky., in the year 1803, raised the cry for Christian union by forsaking all creeds and party names, discarding all ecclesiastical authority, and taking the Bible, and the Bible alone, as the only rule of faith and practice. The movement spread with great rapidity throughout that state, and in some of the western states. Mr. Stone was a man of commanding ability, of profound piety, and of deep moral earnestness. Under the influence of a great spiritual revival in which all hearts flowed together it seemed utterly inconsistent to pertetuate party names, or to acknowledge the authority of human creeds, and these partition walls went down with a crash before the invincible earnestness of these men of God who had been awakened to a new consciousness of unity and of fellowship in

Christ. In a "Last Will and Testament," which Stone and his colaborers made out and formally signed, they bequeathed their party names, their creeds, and their ecclesiastical associations to those who valued such trifles, and, disencumbered, they set out in quest of that long lost unity for which many earnest souls had been yearning.

In the year 1809 there was issued a "Declaration and Address" by Thomas and Alexander Campbell, father and son, in western Pennsylvania, whither they had but recently migrated from North Ireland, in which they set forth the evils of a divided Church, and pointed out the way to union through a return to the simplicity and catholicity of New Testament Christianity. Thomas Campbell was a member of the seceders' branch of the Presbyterian Church, an able and educated minister and a deeply religious man. His son had been reared in the same Church, but developed an independence of thought, a wide knowledge of and reverence for the Scriptures, which, with his extraordinary ability as a preacher and writer, fitted him in an eminent degree for the work of a religious reformer. Looking upon the same evils

which Meldenius, Baxter, and others had seen and deplored, Thomas Campbell uttered a not less remarkable saying in the memorable words which he made the battle cry of reform: "Where the Scriptures speak we speak, and where the Scriptures are silent we are silent." The clear import of this striking motto was, What is enjoined upon men by divine authority we shall insist upon being observed; and where the Word of God has left men free, we shall not bind them. The phrase, "things essential," had now been interpreted to mean the things required by the Scriptures, and the "things non-essential" were those where the silence of the Scriptures left men free to follow their best judgment. In both these mottoes there is a clear recognition of divine authority and an equally distinct rejection of human authority in matters of religious faith and practice. In each of them there is a solemn emphasis of loyalty to God, on the one hand, and of freedom from the tyranny of opinion, on the other."*

Like the movement of Stone, that of the

*Introduction, to "Origin of Disciples of Christ," by J. H. Garrison.

Campbells discarded the authority of human creeds, abandoned the use of all party or denominational names, and urged a return to the faith and practice of the apostolic Church, as approved by the New Testament. It went further than the movement of Stone in the re-discovery of what was the creed of the apostolic Church, namely, the Messiahship and divinity of Jesus of Nazareth, upon which Christ declared he would build his Church. To believe on Christ as the Son of God, and the world's Redeemer, and to obey him as the supreme authority in all matters religious —that, it asserted, is the way to unity. It is not strange that after the lapse of a few years these two movements—that of Stone and the Campbells—met and coalesced, forming a Christian union movement that has mightily affected the religious thought of our times.

THE PROBLEM OF HARMONIZING UNION AND LIBERTY.

What was the distinctive task which this Christian movement set for itself? It undertook the solution of that problem of all the Christian centuries, namely: the har-

monization of Christian liberty and Christian union. How can we stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, while standing fast also in the unity wherewith Christ hath made us one? Roman Catholicism secured union, of a kind, but it sacrificed liberty. Protestantism secured liberty, but at the sacrifice of union. Are these two principles, then, essentially antagonistic, the one to the other? Are they mutually exclusive terms, so that those who enjoy one must do so at the sacrifice of the other? This can not be, for Christ not only taught both union and liberty as principles of his kingdom, but he enjoined them upon his followers. How can they be reconciled?

In a stormy period of our national history, when the different sections of the American Union seemed likely to fall part on the subject of slavery, there were some political leaders who were in favor of sacrificing the Union to save liberty, and there were others who believed in perpetuating the Union, even at the expense of liberty. In that critical period of our national life there stood up in the United States Senate that great constitutional statesman, Daniel

Webster, who propounded a nobler motto: *"Liberty and union, now and forever, one and inseparable!"* That was the slogan that carried us through the struggles of the civil war and brought us out a free and united nation. Liberty to the several states and individuals within the well defined limits of the constitution; union through unswerving loyalty to one flag and one constitution—that was, is and forever must be, the basis of the American Union, whose starry banner is the ensign of hope to all the struggling nationalities of earth.

Liberty *in* Christ and union through loyalty *to* Christ—that is the harmonization of these two principles of the Gospel. Loyalty to all that Christ has clearly commanded—that gives us unity. Loyalty to Christ *only* and a rejection of all human authority in religion—that gives us liberty. So far from there being any conflict between these two principles, each is essential to the other; for just as there can be no *Christian* union without liberty, there can not be real *Christian* liberty, in its widest and best meaning, without union. The vital relation of liberty to union is seen in the fact that

all attempts to bind men's thought and conscience where Christ has left them free have resulted in division and strife, and that all steps in the direction of a reunion of Christendom involve the concession of liberty in matters of opinion, and the rejection of all authority that interposes between Christ and the liberty which the emancipated soul finds in him. But why should we say that union is essential to liberty in its widest and truest sense? Because Christian union means the breaking down of all artificial barriers which separate Christians from each other, and the removal of those prejudices and arbitrary limitations of fellowship which enslave the mind and hinder the soul's true and normal development. May we not say, therefore, in religion as in patriotism "Liberty *and* union, now and forever, one and inseparable."

Here, at last, in the free atmosphere of America, with the full guarantee of civil and religious liberty, there was born, for the first time in history, a religious movement which faced squarely the problem of a divided Christendom, and set for itself the task of promoting the union of Christians in harmony with the prayer of our

divine Lord. It would be strange, indeed, if, coming long after the previous reformatory movements which we have mentioned, profiting by all the truth which they had elicited and emphasized, as well as by their mistakes and shortcomings and directing its aim specifically to healing the divisions of the church, this religious movement of the nineteenth century had not made some important contribution to the problem of unifying the church, and to the work of bringing it more into harmony with the divine pattern shown us in the mount of divine revelation. In his history of the Protestant revolution, Dr. A. H. Newman says, concerning the work of the Genevan reformer: "Calvin, beginning his work at Geneva (1536), had the benefit of nearly twenty years of Protestant experience and prestige. Had his ability been no greater than that of Zwingli and Luther, he might yet have been expected to improve upon their reformatory efforts."* How much more, therefore, might it have been expected that a religious movement, starting nearly three centuries after that of Luther, and almost a

*(Manual of Church History, by A. H. Newman, D. D., LL. D., p. 20.)

century after the Wesleyan reformation in England, should have "improved upon previous reformatory efforts." But especially —and this is more directly to our point— might it have been expected that such a movement having for its specific aim the promotion of unity among Christians, and seeking to find the basis for such unity, would have made a distinct advance toward the solution of this vexed problem. That it did make such advance, we can not doubt will be the verdict of that future history which is to sum up the movements and influences which have brought about a united church.

FEATURES OF CATHOLICITY IN THE MOVEMENT.

The following features of catholicity which this Reformation emphasized, and continues to emphasize, must, we believe, enter into any practicable scheme of Christian union:

1. The rejection of all human creeds or formulations of doctrine as binding upon the conscience, or as bases of communion, or Christian fellowship, and the acceptance of the Bible, and the Bible alone, as the

only authoritative rule of faith and practice.

2. The distinction between the Old and New Testaments, the latter being the will of Christ, and especially applicable to the Christian Church and to Christian life.

3. The abandonment of all doctrines and practices in the Church, as having any binding force, which are not clearly authorized in the New Testament. This was expressed in the motto, "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent."

4. The disuse of all party names, and the use of such names alone as express the common relationship of all true believers to Christ.

5. The return to the ancient and apostolic creed on which Christ said he would build his church, and which is the only true object of saving faith—the Lord Jesus Christ himself. To believe on him with the whole heart is to possess the true, evangelical, saving faith. He, himself, in other words, and not a set of doctrines about him, or about the Church, is the object of faith.

6. Obedience to Christ, in his commandments and ordinances, as interpreted by the best scholarship of the ages, is the condition

of admission into his Church and of continued fellowship with the whole body of believers.

7. Liberty of opinion in all matters indifferent, or non-essential, or which are not inconsistent with Christian faith or conduct.

This, it will be seen, was an effort to attain to catholicity of faith, of teaching, and of practice. It involved the surrender of names, doctrines and practices, which had been very dear to those who committed themselves to this program of union, and it was a severe test of their sincerity and and earnest desire for union. It wrought a revolution in the doctrinal beliefs and practices of the very men who were leaders in the movement. But they were "not disobedient to the heavenly vision."*

*This fact is frequently overlooked by writers on this subject, who are wholly ignorant of the history of the Reformation of which we are speaking. In a recent work on "The Gospel of Love," the author, referring to the evils of divisions, says: "There is a wide-spread cry for the reunion of Christendom. But no church seems willing to make any real concessions of its own peculiar tenets, though all are ready to welcome all others who will abandon their own distinctive opinions in their favor."—"Gospel of Love," p. 66. The original leaders in this movement were Presbyterians first, later they became Baptists, and later still, put aside all denominational titles and creeds and became simply Christians or Disciples of Christ with the distinct motive of promoting Christian union. All religious bodies have contributed their quota of men who were willing to sacrifice denominationalism on the altar of unity.

It is a pertinent question to raise at this point, Are the features above mentioned truly catholic in their nature, that is, such as are believed everywhere and by all Christians? At first thought, it might seem that some of them are not, but we believe a further and maturer reflection will show that they express what all Protestants, at least, either explicitly or implicitly admit to be true. For instance, it may be asked, whether this rejection of all human creeds as binding upon the conscience is not contrary to the belief and practice of those Protestant bodies which have doctrinal creeds and confessions other than the Bible. To this it may be replied that it is the cardinal doctrine of Protestantism, expressed in the very creeds themselves, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments constitute the only infallible rule of faith and practice. In rejecting the binding authority of human creeds, therefore, we are in perfect harmony with the Protestant principle and are only carrying it out to its legitimate results.

No religious body in Christendom would claim for a moment that its own creed offers an adequate basis for Christian union.

These creeds were never intended for anything more than the basis of denominational union and fellowship. The only creed which all Christians believe, and on which they can unite, is the old creed confessed by Simon Peter on the coast of Caesarea Philippi—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." To believe on him, and to wear his name—that is common ground which all can occupy without any sacrifice of truth and conscience. Of course, obedience to Christ in his commandments and ordinances is involved in our acceptance of him as Saviour and Lord. Whatever he commands, the faith which accepts him as Lord will obey. In all else there must be liberty for difference of opinion without interfering with Christian fellowship. There can never be any Christian union without the recognition of this principle of individual liberty in all matters not directly enjoined upon us by the authority of Christ. The meaning of what he has enjoined directly, or through his apostles, is to be interpreted by the consensus of scholarship in the church. If anything be of doubtful meaning according to the world's best scholarship, this should be made a matter of

liberty concerning which every man is to be fully persuaded in his own opinion. This assumes that every believer in Christ desires to do what Christ has commanded him to do. Nothing short of this is faith in its New Testament meaning.

This, it would seem, is Christianity reduced to its least common denominator. In other words, it is the "irreducible minimum" without which you can not have a church, or Christianity in any visible or practicable form. On this foundation of faith in Christ, and of loyal obedience to him, has been built the Church of the Lord Jesus, and on that foundation it rests today. There are a thousand things which may enter into the enrichment of Christian life when we have once built upon this foundation, but these things are not to be added to the foundation and made a part of the conditions of entrance upon the Christian life. If this were done, the basis of fellowship would cease to be catholic and many would become Christians without being able to accept this basis of fellowship. This has been the source of our divisions and subdivisions in the religious world. We have not sufficiently distinguished be-

tween the things that are vital and essential, which belong to the faith, and the things which are incidental and inferential, which are matters of subsequent knowledge and investigation.

HAVE THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST BEEN LOYAL TO THEIR IDEAL?

It is one thing to have a great ideal, and quite another thing to be always loyal to and consistent with that ideal. If this be true of the individual, how much more true is it of a religious movement, with its thousands and tens of thousands of advocates and adherents, having different temperaments, varying degrees of culture and widely differing religious antecedents and environment? It must be confessed, at once, that while the greatest leaders of the movement throughout its history have kept steadily in view its catholic spirit and principles, and in their teaching and practice have adhered to the same with as great fidelity as is given to mortals, large sections of the brotherhood have, at different times, and in different places, been swayed in their spirit and teaching by ideals and motives which, to the extent they have prevailed, have been

subversive of the chief aim of the movement. This has been true of every religious reformation in history, and the Disciples of Christ had no right to expect immunity from such divisive tendencies. We would gladly drop the curtain over these pages of history, were it not for the useful lessons they may teach us in avoiding similar errors in the future.

The most distinguishing feature of the movement, and one which entitles it to rank as a Christian union movement, is the distinction it has always drawn between faith, which is personal confidence and trust in a personal Saviour, and matters of opinion or inference, as we have already pointed out. But, strange to say, it has been just at this point where there have been most frequent failures to live up to the high ideal. Instances of this failure are to be seen in the fierce opposition that was at one time waged against the use of instrumental music in public worship. This custom was held by some good brethren to be a violation of the principle that "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." This was of course to confound mere matters of method,

or of expediency, with matters of faith and loyalty to Jesus Christ. To conceive of the New Testament as a Christian law book, entering into the minutiae of worship and of service, is to misconceive the very spirit and genius of Christianity, and to ignore the wide gulf which separates it from Judaism; and yet one of the strong points of the movement has been to emphasize the dispensational lines, and to bring every item of Christian faith and practice to the test of the Christian dispensation! It is an illustration of how people sometimes fail to follow out their own premises to their legitimate conclusions.

The same erroneous method of reasoning has been applied to the Sunday-school, to missionary organizations, to certain methods of observing the Lord's Supper, to the Christian Endeavor Society, to postures in prayer, to church architecture, and many other incidental things relating to mere methods of work and of worship. In some instances local churches have been rent asunder over the organ question, and sister congregations have been alienated from each other because of the different ways of doing missionary work. It is easy to see,

of course, how utterly inconsistent with any claim of catholicity of position or spirit, for the movement, have been these divisive ideas and practices. And yet there are well-meaning people devoted to these doctrines and practices with a zeal that is in inverse proportion to their knowledge of church history and of the meaning and breadth of the religious movement with which they are identified.

But there are other ways in which some have been disloyal to this high ideal. This ideal implies that Christianity consists, as it does, of faith in and devotion to Christ, and is pre-eminently a spiritual religion; that it is a *life*, rather than a system of doctrine, although it involves sound doctrine. And yet it has often happened that in their preaching and teaching the chief emphasis has been laid by these men on things that are external, rather than on things which are internal and vital. Obedience to an external command, like baptism or the Lord's Supper, has sometimes been taken more as a test of loyalty to Christ than general conformity to his teaching as relates to conduct and character. They have not always given first place to things of first importance,

and godliness and prayer, with purity of heart and life, have often received less emphasis than doctrinal accuracy and a correct pronunciation of the shibboleths. Sometimes the spirit of humility and of teachableness is not exemplified to as great a degree as might be expected of those who claim to be simply learners of Christ. It must be admitted, too, that sometimes the zeal of party success has apparently been greater than the desire for the unity of God's people.

These departures, here and there, from the divine ideal which the Disciples set out to realize are the natural results of defective education and training, of imperfect spiritual development, and, more even, of divisive teaching and preaching by false leaders, who have done much to prevent unity among themselves, and hence to hamper the work of commending Christian unity to others. But it has never been otherwise in history. Every great cause has had to win its way to success and final victory not only through the opposition of its enemies, but over the mistakes of its friends. Perhaps this opposition and these mistakes of short-sighted friends, may be the very means of

developing more clearly the strength of the righteous cause. But whatever the causes, and whatever the sad results of such failures, it is comforting and reassuring to know that these faults are seen and recognized more clearly to-day than ever before, and that the great body of both ministers and members are moving in the direction of greater loyalty to their divine ideal, and are giving a more practical illustration of what is involved in their plea for Christian union.

The fact that the spirit and most characteristic principles of the movement have been misconceived and misrepresented by many of its professed advocates accounts, in part at least, for its misconception and misrepresentation by those without, and for much of the prejudice against it. The rest must be set down to the weakness of our poor human nature which so readily dissents from what does not agree with its own preconceived ideas, and which so easily believes evil reports concerning it. Our own shortcomings, however, should teach us charity in judging others for faults of which we ourselves may not be wholly innocent. No doubt much mutual misunderstanding of each others' position

and aims prevails among Christians, the removal of which should be the aim of all lovers of peace, good will and unity among Christians.

CHANGE OF ATTITUDE TOWARD THE MOVEMENT ON THE PART OF THE RELIGIOUS WORLD.

The attitude of the religious world, generally, toward this movement for Christian union, in its beginning and for many years afterwards, was that of hostility. Protestantism in the main seemed to have settled down in the conviction that denominationalism was the normal and permanent condition of the Church, to disturb which by any plea for union was to disturb the divine order of things. The plea of the Campbells and of Stone for a return to the unity of the apostolic church by a return to New Testament Christianity in its simplicity and catholicity, seemed to the religious leaders of that age as an idle dream—a Utopian scheme which was neither practicable nor desirable. The leaders of this movement were denounced as schismatic and the builders of a new sect. It is not easy to see why

they should have been denounced on this account. If denominationalism be, indeed, the divine order of things, why, then, should not these men have been hailed as true fellow-workers in bringing to birth a new denomination? But, strange to say, this inconsistency has always marked the course of those who have defended the present denominational *status quo*.

But, after all, it is not strange that this movement, in its origin, met with bitter opposition and that its advocates were looked upon as disturbers of the peace of Israel. To that age, at least, it seemed a most revolutionary program that was proposed by the Reformers. It involved the abandonment of all existing human creeds as bonds of union or communion; of all party names as promoting and perpetuating divisions, and the acceptance, instead thereof, of the common rule of faith and practice, the common faith and the common religious names, which all God's people would be willing to accept. At the present time, when the power of creeds has waned, when denominational names are held subordinate to the name that is above every name, and when the common faith in Christ is exalted far

above theological systems and dogmas, the position assumed by these Reformers does not seem so revolutionary as in the former days. The opposition was no greater, perhaps, than has been experienced by every new movement in the world that has interfered seriously with prevailing customs, opinions and traditions. Moreover, there was one good service which this opposition rendered to the Cause it sought to destroy: it served to keep out of the new movement all who were not actuated by the deepest and most conscientious convictions of truth, and made its advocates realize that they were suffering for truth's sake, and thus intensified the bond of unity and of brotherly love.

It is very obvious that a great change has come over the religious world in its attitude, both toward Christian unity and to the people who were its original advocates. Everywhere, except perhaps in the most benighted regions, the ministers and churches of the Disciples of Christ are welcomed into all the councils and co-operative movements of the evangelical churches, and the plea for Christian union is heard in nearly all the pulpits of Christendom. Far

and wide, in the foreign field as well as in the home field, and even more strongly in foreign lands than in our own country, the tide of Christian union sentiment is sweeping onward, swelling in volume and momentum. The single voice of Thomas Campbell, crying in the wilderness of sectarian factions and strifes, "One is our Master, and all we be brethren; let us love and serve one another, in a united brotherhood of believers," has swelled into a mighty chorus of voices heard around the world pleading for the union of a divided church in order to the conversion of the world!

Out of the growing spirit of unity came, first of all, the Evangelical Alliance, which Alexander Campbell hailed with joy as one of the signs of promise and to which he pledged his co-operation to the fullest extent of his ability. It was an attempt to give some sort of expression to the fact that these great Protestant bodies held some vital truths in common, and were allies in a common Cause rather than mutual foes. Not knowing how else to manifest their unity at that time, they drew up a creedal statement which was supposed to contain

what was most fundamental in the common Christian faith as the basis of their co-operation. In many places, it will be remembered, our ministers were ruled out of these local alliances because they were not considered evangelical.* It will be remembered, too, with what righteous indignation we protested against this injustice at the hands of our brethren of the various denominations, who denied to us a place in the household of faith. While this Alliance has never realized the expectation which its friends entertained for it, it deserves honorable recognition as the first attempt to present something to the world better than warring or competing denominations.

The Young Men's Christian Association has also served the purpose of furnishing a broader platform than that afforded by any existing denomination for interdenominational co-operation in efforts to save

*It is easy to imagine with what unanimous voice the Inter-Church Conference would have been condemned for its narrowness, by all who oppose federation, as well as by those favoring it, had the Disciples been excluded from such federation on the ground that they were not evangelical! But why so, if the other Protestant bodies are not sufficiently Christian to make our co-operation with them consistent with our plea for Christian union? To such complainers, our religious neighbors might apply the words of Jesus to the Jews: "We piped unto you and ye did not dance; we wailed and ye did not weep." Luke 7:32.

young men. Based on the great fundamentals of Christian faith, and ignoring denominational distinctions, it has made its beneficent influence felt around the globe. The great interdenominational movement in Sunday-school work furnishes another instance of the desire of the various religious bodies to work together, as far as possible, for common ends, as regards this great interest of the church. Its series of uniform lesssons for the Sundayschools of all religious bodies has been a mighty force working for unity.

Perhaps the most remarkable of all these interdenominational movements, in some respects, is the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, which, in a quarter of a century, has girdled the globe and has brought together the young people of all the churches in union services, where they are learning to love and respect each other. Its great conventions have brought together representative men out of various religious bodies who have spoken from the same platform, and given testimony to their common faith and life. It has been a mighty influence, under God, for breaking down barriers of prejudice and provincial-

ism and of making the various Protestant bodies realize how great are the matters they hold in common as compared with the things in which they differ.

Along with this growing spirit of unity there has come a kindlier feeling toward the movement of the Disciples of Christ. Prejudice and suspicion have given way in enlightened communities to fraternity and hearty appreciation. It is no longer a question as to the evangelical character of the movement, but only as to how far its plea for Christian union is practicable.

FORCES MAKING FOR UNION.

What influences have been at work to bring about this remarkable change in sentiment in the religious world on the subject of Christian union? Effects are not produced without causes, and an intelligent knowledge of these causes helps us to understand the nature of the effects and to forecast with considerable certainty other results of a similar character.

1. First of all, we can not doubt that the religious movement inaugurated by the Campbells and Barton W. Stone in the first decade of the last century, which had for

its specific aim the promotion of Christian union, has been one of the most important factors in producing the change to which we have referred. It would, indeed, be very strange if this were not the case. Here were men of learning, of piety, of pre-eminent ability, and of commanding influence, devoting their lives to this holy cause. They have had a line of noble successors, who, for nearly a century, in pulpit and periodical, through books and pamphlets, have advocated, without wavering, the necessity of Christian union in order to the conversion of the world. They have emphasized the evils of division among the people of God, and have pointed out what seemed to them a practicable basis of union by a return to the original foundation on which the Church was built and by loyal adherence to the simple teaching of Christ and his apostles in relation to church membership and Christian life. Whatever may be thought about the influence which this plea has exerted, there can be no question in any candid, thoughtful mind, that the changes which have come about in religious sentiment have been in the direction of this plea, not only as regards the evils of di-

vision and the necessity of union, but also in respect to the *method* of union, which is not to be on any authorized statement of doctrine, no matter how irenic, but on Jesus Christ himself, with large liberality and charity for all differences in theological opinions and doctrinal inferences. The exaltation of Christ as the center of unity and a corresponding decrease of authority in doctrinal creeds, has kept pace steadily with the growth of Christian union sentiment, and is one of the most marked characteristics of the religious thinking of our time. It is a matter of small concern to us, as reformers, whether proper credit be given to the movement we represent for its influence in behalf of Christian union if only the *principles* for which we have contended find their way to acceptance and Christ's prayer for the unity of his followers be fulfilled.

2. The revival of Bible study in connectin with the subject of historical criticism, and the better knowledge of the Scriptures which has resulted from this agitation, we can not doubt, must be set down as one of the contributing causes to the growing sentiment in favor of Christian union. In

any such study of the Bible, in the light of its proper divisions and of its dispensational lines, and with a clear recognition of the progressive character of revelation, advancing from the twilight of patriarchal times to the glorious sunlight of the Christian age, Jesus Christ is seen in his true perspective, and his divine personality looms up far above patriarchs, prophets and apostles, as the supreme and sole object of Christian faith, and the only center around which can be rallied the scattered forces of a divided church.

3. Another mighty influence making for union has been that spiritual development within the church which inevitably leads away from narrowness and bigotry toward larger and more catholic views. Our divisions, as Paul tells us, have their origin in our carnality, and just as the Church grows more spiritual will it become more united. Union among Christians can only follow a close and vital union with Jesus Christ; that is one reason why we can not force Christian union; it must grow. We can not get closer to Christ without getting closer to each other. The unity for which Christ prayed is the unity of the Spirit, and

it is only as that Spirit dominates the lives of Christians that they can be one. Therefore all movements looking toward deepening the spiritual life of the Church are movements in behalf of Christian union.

4. Through a better knowledge of the condition of the world and the mission of the Church, Christian people are coming to a clearer apprehension of the great tasks which lie before the Church in the evangelization and Christianization of the world. Three-fifths of all the people which live upon the globe are yet in pagan darkness. To them the Gospel must be sent. And then there is the cleansing of our own Christian civilization of its abominations and the lifting up of a higher standard of morals in our social, political and industrial life. As the Church has gained a clearer vision of these great tasks before it, it has realized more and more the necessity of united effort and the sinfulness of wasting our strength, time and resources in building up denominational walls and quibbling over our theological differences, while so large a part of the world is yet without God and without hope, knowing nothing of Christ and his great salvation.

5. The world is becoming more and more united. Nations are forming alliances in the interests of peace and civilization. The whole world is coming to feel the sense of a common brotherhood. The poet's dream of the "Parliament of Man" approaches realization. This spirit of unity is affecting the Church. A united world demands a united Church.

6. The various interdenominational organizations, to which reference has already been made, are not only *expressions* of a union sentiment already existing, but they are mighty factors in *deepening* that sentiment and in removing obstacles out of the way of union. There is no greater foe to union than isolation, and there is no more important method of promoting union than the free intermingling of religious people, and especially in the working together for common ends and aims. To know each other, and to give each other credit for honesty of purpose, sincerity of faith, and the reality of Christian character, is to go far in the direction of realizing the oneness for which the Master prayed.

These are some of the various factors which, under God, have wrought this

change in sentiment in the Church as respects the unity of Christians, and which are still working for the more perfect realization of that divine ideal.

THE LATEST STEP TOWARD CHRISTIAN UNION.

We come now to the consideration of the very latest of these efforts to give visible and tangible expression to the growing unity of the Church, for the double purpose of utilizing this unity in the service of our common Master, and of promoting a still closer unification of the religious forces of Christendom.

It is evident from what has already been said concerning the growing consciousness of unity and the growing sense of the evils of division, in our Protestant Christendom, that some further step must be taken. The feeling is general that, while all the previous interdenominational movements had served, and are serving, an excellent purpose in promoting a better understanding among Christians, they were nevertheless inadequate expressions of the unity of the Church itself, and that something better must be undertaken. This feeling had been

manifesting itself for several years in various tentative co-operative movements, at first locally, and then growing wider in their scope until a national organization was effected. The name given to this form of co-operation among the different religious bodies was termed *Federation,* to distinguish it from former and less orderly and systematic methods of co-operation. The latter term had long been in use to indicate the working together of the local congregations of any one religious body. Now that a wider movement was to be attempted, involving the co-operation, under certain rules and conditions, and for certain purposes, of the different religious bodies, it was felt that a new term would be necessary to distinguish this new and wider movement from other forms of co-operation, and so the term *Federation* was adopted. Perhaps something in the analogy of the movement with our Federal Union had something to do in suggesting the term. The several states are free and independent within the limitations of their constitutional rights, and yet all owe allegiance to a supreme national constitution. The states stand on the basis of equality of rights, each recognizing the

other as a state, and entitled to the same rights and liberties which itself enjoys. It was believed that Christian union sentiment had reached a degree of development which made it possible for such a union to be formed among the evangelical Protestant bodies. This very fact has been made an objection to federation by some, on the ground that it involves an indorsement of the errors, in faith and practice, of the religious bodies entering into the federation movement. But let it be noticed that in the Federal Union the states are not equal in wealth, in general intelligence, in their laws, in the enforcement of these laws, in their political sentiments, in population, and in their influence upon the national life. They stand on the plane of equality, however, as to their rights and privileges as free, autonomous states. No more does federation imply that the various co-operating bodies are equal in their intelligent understanding of the Scriptures, in their conformity to the New Testament ideal of the Church, or in their spiritual development. They may, and do, vary greatly in these respects; but since they are one in holding to Christ as their living Head, and in their

earnest desire to do his will and promote his glory in the salvation of men, they can agree to recognize each other as Christians —not as *perfect* Christians; as Christian *bodies,* not as perfect Scriptural bodies, having equal rights under the law of God, to be true to their convictions in the worship of God and in efforts to advance his kingdom.

In some of these tentative federation movements in the different states and cities some rules were adopted which were found to be impracticable, and some mistakes have been made, as will always be the case among fallible men, even whey they are seeking to carry out what they believe to be the will of God. These fragmentary movements, while of value in preparing the way for something better, were not satisfactory. It was believed that something better was practicable, and the great Inter-Church Conference in New York City in November, 1905, was called, in this conviction. It was believed that the time had come when the evangelical Protestant bodies of Christendom should, through representative men chosen for this purpose, deal with this problem of a closer co-opera-

tion. In such a gathering, composed of leading men out of the various religious bodies, it was felt there would be such a consensus of judgment as would be able to form a basis of co-operation that would be just to all, that would give perfect freedom to all, and would yet secure such a measure of co-operation as would give a far better expression to the unity which exists to-day than had yet been given by any existing organization or form of co-operation. The delegates in this conference represented, it is estimated, about eighteen million Christians, and its utterances could not fail to profoundly influence the religious thought and life of the times. The addresses delivered revealed a strength of sentiment in favor of Christian union and against the continuation of our extreme denominationalism that surpassed anything which the most ardent friends of Christian union had anticipated. The great theme of the conference was the fulfillment of Christ's prayer for the unity of his followers. This sentiment made itself felt in every speech, in every prayer and in every song.

The critical point, however, as all felt from the beginning, was to form a basis of

co-operation that would be acceptable to all the religious bodies represented. It was clear that some things would have to be avoided that had marred the usefulness of other plans of co-operation. In the first place, there must be no attempt to form a doctrinal creed which all would accept. It was evident that our union must be in Christ alone, and that no other creed but him should be suggested. Then, it was clearly self-evident that each of the co-operating bodies must be allowed the fullest liberty to carry out what it believes to be its providential mission. Federation, in other words, must not be interpreted as an interference with the free life and development of the co-operating bodies. Any provision of that kind would have been rejected instantly as interfering with the rights of conscience and with the liberty which we have in Christ. Again, it was perfectly manifest that any Council formed under this basis of federation must have no authority, other than purely advisory influence, over the co-operating churches, and that, in the last analysis, each local church, or each religious body through its representatives, must decide whether any given measure recom-

mended by the Council should be carried out. It was believed that if these points were carefully guarded and a simple plan devised for a representative gathering, quadrennially, to consider the interests of the Church universal, to give utterance to its convictions upon the great moral reforms of the day, and to provide for local federations to carry on the work in their respective communities, it would accomplish the end which all had in view. A committee of forty representing all the religious bodies named was appointed to prepare and submit such a basis, and the plan they submitted was adopted with the most remarkable unanimity and enthusiasm.

Following is the "Basis of Federation" adopted by the Inter-Church Conference:

BASIS OF FEDERATION.

PREAMBLE.

Whereas, In the providence of God, the time has come when it seems fitting more fully to manifest the essential oneness of the Christian churches of America in Jesus Christ as their divine Lord and Savior, and to promote the spirit of fellowship, service and co-operation among them, the delegates to the Inter-Church Conference on Federation assembled in

New York City, do hereby recommend the following Plan of Federation to the Christian bodies represented in this Conference for their approval:

PLAN OF FEDERATION.

1. For the prosecution of work that can be better done in union than in separation a Council is hereby established whose name shall be the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ of America.

2. The following Christian bodies shall be entitled to representation in this Federal Council on their approval of the purpose and plan of the organization:

[Here follow the names of thirty Protestant bodies represented in the Conference.]

3. The object of this Federal Council shall be—

(1) To express the fellowship and catholic unity of the Christian Church.

(2) To bring the Christian bodies of America into united service for Christ and the world.

(3) To encourage devotional fellowship and mutual counsel concerning the spiritual life and religious activities of the churches.

(4) To secure a larger combined influence for the churches of Christ in all matters affecting the moral and social condition of the people, so as to promote the application of the law of Christ in every relation of human life.

(5) To assist in the organization of local branches of the Federal Council to promote its aims in their communities.

4. This Federal Council shall have no authority over the constituent bodies adhering to it; but its province shall be limited to the expression of its counsel and the recommending of a course of action in matters of common interest to the churches, local councils and individual Christians.

It has no authority to draw up a common creed, or form of government, or of worship, or in any way to limit the full autonomy of the Christian bodies adhering to it.

5. Members of this Federal Council shall be appointed as follows:

Each of the Christian bodies adhering to this Federal Council shall be entitled to four members, and shall be further entitled to one member for every 50,000 of its communicants or major fraction thereof. The question of representation of local councils shall be referred to the several constituent bodies, and to the first meeting of the Federal Council.

6. Any action to be taken by this Federal Council shall be by the general vote of its members. But in case one-third of the members present and voting request it, the vote shall be by the bodies represented, the members of each body voting separately; and action shall require the vote, not only of a

majority of the members voting, but also of the bodies represented.

7. Other Christian bodies may be admitted into membership of this Federal Council on their request if approved by a vote of two-thirds of the members voting at a session of this council, and of two-thirds of the bodies represented, the representatives of each body voting separately.

8. The Federal Council shall meet in December, 1908, and thereafter once in every four years.

9. The officers of this Federal Council shall be a president, one vice-president from each of its constituent bodies, a corresponding secretary, a recording secretary, a treasurer, and an executive committee, who shall perform the duties usually assigned to such officers.

The corresponding secretary shall aid in organizing and assisting local councils, and shall represent the Federal Council in its work, under the direction of the executive committee.

The executive committee shall consist of seven ministers and seven laymen, together with the president, all ex-presidents, the corresponding secretary, the recording secretary and the treasurer. The executive committee shall have authority to attend to all business of the Federal Council in the intervals of its meetings and to fill any vacancies.

All officers shall be chosen at the quad-

rennial meetings of the council, and shall hold their office until their successors take office.

The president, vice-presidents, the corresponding secretary, the recording secretary and the treasurer shall be elected by the Federal Council on nomination by the executive committee.

The executive committee shall be elected by ballot after nomination by a nominating committee.

10. This plan of federation may be altered or amended by a majority vote of the members, followed by a majority vote of the representatives of the several constituent bodies, each body voting separately.

11. The expenses of the Federal Council shall be provided for by the several constituent bodies.

This plan of federation shall become operative when it shall have been approved by two-thirds of the above bodies to which it shall be presented.

It shall be the duty of each delegation to this conference to present this plan of federation to its national body, and ask its consideration and proper action.

In case this plan of federation is approved by two-thirds of the proposed constituent bodies the executive committee of the National Federation of Churches and Christian Workers, which has called this conference, is requested to call the Federal Council to meet at a fitting place in December, 1908.

FEDERATION THE NEXT LOGICAL STEP.

It is very instructive to study the evolution of Christian union sentiment. There was a time when the different religious bodies seemed to think they were doing God service in waging warfare against each other, and in strengthening their own denominational position at the expense of another. In this state of mutual warfare no respect was paid to each other in planning for the extension of God's kingdom on earth. It was a step forward when religious comity took the place of open warfare, and when the different churches were able to say to each other, as Abraham said to Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee. * * * If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you will take the right hand, then I will go to the left." That is, they agreed to let each other alone, and not trespass upon each other's territory.

This soon gave place to something still better. The religious bodies holding Christ as their common Head, came to feel that they did not wish to let each other alone; that they had too much in common, and

that they should meet together on stated occasions and manifest their brotherliness of spirit. This was the period of platform unity. Representatives of different ecclesiastical bodies met and exchanged courtesies, and compliments, and showed that they really did recognize each other as brethren. Occasionally they held union meetings, or united in some crusade against certain public evils that were a menace to the moral welfare of the community; but these efforts were irregular and spasmodic, and passed away with the exigency which called them forth. But all this was a preparatory step to something better. It was during this period that most all our great interdenominational movements had their origin, furnishing an opportunity for brotherly intermingling and co-operation. But the time came—inevitably came—when leaders in the various religious bodies began to feel that something better than occasional platform meetings, and occasional union meetings, was required to meet the demand of our Lord's prayer for the unity of his followers, and what they finally decided upon as an advance step toward this consummation was Church

Federation—an agreement to co-operate together on the simple basis of the acceptance of Christ as Saviour and Lord, in all things which represented common aims and which could be better accomplished by united than by separate action. The inevitable sequence of this movement, as following those which had gone before, and its essential relation to the realization of the age-long desire for unity, may be seen in the light of the following facts:

1. There has been marked progress within the past quarter of a century in the SPIRIT of unity among the churches of this country. Not only so, but there is a much greater unity of BELIEF and of TEACHING and PRACTICE, than there was a half or a quarter of a century ago. We have passed out of what has been called the centrifugal period of the Church, when religious bodies were flying off from the center, into the centripetal period, in which the religious bodies are being drawn closer toward the center, which is Chirst.

2. Nevertheless, each of these religious bodies believes, conscientiously, that it stands for certain vital, or at least important, truths, and that it is its duty to give

continuous emphasis to these truths. Let us take our own religious movement for example: We believe that we stand for certain great and important truths which need emphasis in our day, and we would not agree to any union that involved the surrender of any of these vital truths or principles. We must allow that other religious bodies are just as conscientious as we are, and hold with as great tenacity to certain principles in policy or doctrine, which they regard as important, if not vital, to the welfare of the church.

3. We have never advocated a union that involved the sacrifice of any man's conscience, for no sort of union would be worth anything to a man if he has purchased it at the expense of his conscience. Conscience is not something that can be modified on demand; it requires a process of education and enlightenment in which truth is seen in different proportion and in proper relation to effect a change in conscience.

4. This means that we can not IMMEDIATELY have Christian union on what WE believe to be the New Testament basis, since some of the beliefs and practices conscientiously adhered to by many we believe to be

at variance with New Testament teaching and practice. We can not ask others to do what we ourselves refuse to do, namely, surrender honest convictions of truth for the sake of unity. When we have made due allowance for liberty in matters of doctrine and polity which do not affect Christian faith or character there still remain obstacles to an immediate union of the ideal type taught in the New Testament.

5. Meanwhile, in spite of their imperfections, God has blessed, and is blessing, these various religious bodies just in proportion as they have been, and are, faithful to him, and give themselves to the advancement of his kingdom. To deny that these churches have the marks of divine favor upon them, would be to shut our eyes to the most patent facts. The truth forces itself upon us that God has no perfect instrumentalities in this world, and that he is using the best instruments he has for the accomplishment of his purposes.

6. Since the period of most rapid growth in Christian union sentiment has been the period of the greatest interdenominational co-operation, it is clear that it is not by the policy of ISOLATION, but by that of

CLOSER CO-OPERATION, that this process of unification is to be carried on toward perfection. Not to see this is to be blind to the present-day movements of God among his people.

TO WHAT CONCLUSION?

To what conclusion do the foregoing facts point as to the duty of the various religious bodies toward the federation movement? If the ideal toward which the Church must move is the unity among Christ's followers for which he prayed—a unity that by its self-evidencing power and by the co-operative effectiveness of its several parts, will convince the world of Christ's divine nature and mission; and if that unity, which is yet in the future, can only be realized as the various members of the one body come into vital touch with its living Head; if conscience is not to be sacrificed for the sake of a forced unity, and conscience can best be enlightened, both as to the need and method of union, by free intermingling and co-operation of believers, as shown by the experience of the past; if the ideal unity is not to be

reached by "a single bound," any more than heaven is so reached, but its glorious heights attained "round by round," the conclusion is as inevitable as the logic of facts can make it, that it is the duty of the various groups of Christians designated as churches, or denominations, to co-operate as far as they can see their way clear to do so, for the manifestation of the common life and the common faith which they have, and for the better accomplishment of those ends and aims which require united action.

We have said that this is the plain *duty* of Christian bodies, but we feel justified in putting it even stronger than that: it is the *inevitable trend* of the Christian thought and life of our times. By this we mean that every living thing unfolds and develops acording to the law of its life. The acorn is predestined by the law of life embodied in its germ to develop into an oak. It can not grow any other way. A grain of wheat is predestined by the law of its life to a certain process of development culminating in a stalk of ripened wheat. It can not grow or develop otherwise. The Church, in so far as it is an embodiment of divine

life, must develop according to the law of that life—"the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." The vital germ of this law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus is love, and love is essentially unifying. There is, therefore, absolutely no other line of development for the Church of the future, if it be true to Christ, except in the direction of unity. This is why any prophet of God today may know that the present movement toward unity is to increase until it reaches the sublime culmination of a united church.

What we have said concerning the inevitableness of this trend toward unity applies only to those bodies which actually hold to Christ as their supreme authority, sharing in his life and moving in obedience, more or less perfect, to his divine will. It follows, of course, that the more fully any given religious body is under the control of Christ's will, and the more fully its members have become partakers of the divine life which is in Christ, the more swiftly will such a body move toward the fulfillment of Christ's prayer for the unity of his followers. This is a test which no religious body can evade. It is not an arbitrary one, but one that grows out of the very

nature of things. No surer is it that Christ is the source of our life and of our unity, than that we approach toward that unity which he desired, for which he prayed, and which his Spirit inspires, just in proportion as we are brought under the spell of his divine personality, and are obedient to the leadership of his Spirit. This implies what we presume no one will deny, that no religious body is living wholly under the authority of Christ, and is in perfect conformity to his will, thereby perfectly exemplifying the unity and accomplishing the work which he desired. The *assumption* of perfection on the part of any religious body would be the surest proof of its estrangement from the Spirit of Christ, and of its unpreparedness for unity with others of his followers. Indeed, there is no need of any proclamation on that point whatever, since there is an old-fashioned test which Christ gave to the world long ago, by which men and movements are measured—"By their fruits shall ye know them." The fruit of unity, therefore, among ourselves and with other folllowers of Christ, is the best possible proof that we are united with him.

What is the meaning of these facts if it

be not that God is calling us to ultimate unity through the method of co-operation in all things wherein we are agreed? Can any religious body justify its holding aloof from this step toward unity on the ground that it has received special light on the subject of union and occupies more advanced ground than others? Does not that very fact, if it be a fact, furnish an additional reason why such a body should lend its strength to the weakness of the others in bringing about a closer unity? If such a body of Christians, because of its special advocacy of Christian union and its historic devotion to that cause, has gained some coign of vantage, does it not owe it to the religious world, and to Him who has called it with this holy calling, to bring this light to bear in the most effective way on other religious people in order to hasten the end which we all desire? Indeed, does not such a body owe it to *itself*, unless it has attained to perfection, both in knowledge and practice, in faith and in character, to come into such close touch with other Christians that it may receive from them whatever they may have to confer?

To refuse assent to, and co-operation

with, this movement toward unity on the plea that it is not the ideal unity of the New Testament, would be to ignore the whole law of progressive development in the kingdom of God. We lay this down as an axiomatic truth: *It is as much our duty to manifest and put to some practical use the unity which already exists, as it is to labor and pray for an ideal unity that is yet far in the future.* Indeed the way to hasten the ideal unity is to put to practical use the unity which we already have. "To him that hath shall be given, and to him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath," is a universal law in the kingdom of grace.

This is the method of unity prescribed by Paul for the Philippians: "Let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, [full grown] be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded this also shall God reveal unto you: only whereunto we have attained, by that same rule let us walk."* That is, as far as you *do* see alike walk together, and in so doing God will reveal

*Phil. 3:15, 16.

to you the additional truth that will make your unity complete.

We are bound, therefore, by every consideration of loyalty to Jesus Christ, and by every regard for our future growth and development, to co-operate to the fullest extent possible,—which would be in different degrees, no doubt, in different places—with all who love and serve our Lord Jesus Christ for the advancement of his kingdom among men. This is what the federation movement means, and as such, it is the next logical step—the next *inevitable* step—toward the complete unity of Christians.

EXTERNAL MOTIVES TO UNION.

We have spoken of the inevitableness of the tendency toward unity in the Church, by reason of the internal law of its life unfolding without, according to the divine order of progressive development. It remains to be said that this tendency of the internal law of life is mightily reinforced by external conditions in the world to which the Church is called to minister. The needs of humanity make a powerful appeal to this

inward law of life, which is the law of love. Love is always stimulated to make its greatest sacrifices and put forth its highest efforts to relieve from suffering, or protect from peril, the object of its affections. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." When will it be written that the Church "so loved the world" that it gave up its sectarian spirit, aims, ambitions, names, creeds, its half-hearted consecration, and whatever else hinders its unity and co-operation, that the world "might not perish, but have everlasting life"? Some time that fact must be written if the world is ever to be redeemed by Christ. The infinite love of God, which found expression in Christ, must also find expression in his Church, which is to be the medium for conveying that love to a perishing world.

In the past, it must be confessed, the Church has been so much absorbed in defining and defending its theological position, so occupied with questions of organization and government, so exhausted by its efforts at denominational propaganda, that it has not caught a clear vision of the

world's needs and of its own obligation to minister to these needs.

It is only recently that it seems to have become conscious of the stupendous tasks which Christ has laid upon it, and of its need of unity in order to the accomplishment of these tasks. What the Church of to-day needs, more than anything else, perhaps, to fill it with the spirit of consecration, unification, and co-operation, is to catch a clear and distinct vision of this world's needs as seen through the eyes of Jesus Christ. Such a vision would humble it, put it upon its knees in prayer, and cause it to cry to God for a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit, to fit it to accomplish these great tasks. Let us look for a moment at some of these needs which appeal to the Church for united action.

Three men out of every five, of all the millions that dwell upon the globe, abide even yet in pagan darkness. So far as these three-fifths of the human race are concerned, God's love manifested in the sending of his Son, and Christ's death for the sins of men, in manifestation of that same love, were in vain. They have not yet heard the good news, and are "with-

out God and without hope in the world." Christ has called out his Church from the world to carry to these hopeless millions the good news of salvation, and he prayed for its unity to the end that this sublime purpose might be accomplished. Oh, if we only had ears to hear the plaintive and inarticulate cry that comes from the heart of the heathen world—its deep moan of anguish because its knows not God nor the meaning and mystery of life! If we only had eyes to see the moral desolation that prevails even yet in so-called Christian lands, and the gigantic evils which threaten our civilization and all that is dearest and most sacred in life! If we only had hearts to appreciate the religious indifference that lies like a blight upon so large a part of our population, and could realize that these great tasks remain unaccomplished, and these gigantic evils unremedied, because there has not been, and is not even yet, a united Church, how rapidly would our little differences and prejudices give way before these mighty motives for united action! The Church has lost its moral leadership in the great reforms of the age because of its divisions and internal strifes. That

leadership can only be regained by closing up its divided ranks and undertaking seriously the overthrow of these great moral evils which oppose the progress of the kingdom of God. Every cry that comes from the desolate heart of orphanage; every moan of anguish that comes from neglected widowhood and poverty; every ruined life and wrecked home which may attribute its downfall to the open saloon and the gambling hell, is a challenge to the Church to vindicate its divine character and mission by rising to the needs of the hour. Every form of unbelief and of practical atheism which defies the law of God and tramples under its unhallowed feet the sacred rights of men, and all false "isms," philosophies and cults, that draw men away from the feet of Christ, are so many calls to the Church to rise to the height of its great opportunity and obligation. All this widespread corruption that has tarnished the fair fame of our nation and people, this mammon worship and public and private graft, is an awful impeachment of the fidelity of the Church in molding the lives and characters of men.

These are only a few of the external mo-

tives, in the great world without, which appeal with convincing power to the life within the Church to organize, mobilize and unify its forces to meet these needs. Once the Church comes to realize the magnitude of its responsibilities for the performance of these great tasks, how gladly would we all join hands with our brothers who differ with us in some things, but who agree with us in many more things, in order that we may work together, as far as possible, for the overthrow of Satan's kingdom and for bringing in the triumphant reign of the kingdom of God!

Just before the great naval conflict in which England was to measure the strength of her navy against that of another nation, Lord Nelson said to two of his high officers who were at enmity with each other, as he placed their hands together, "Be friends; yonder is your enemy!" Is not Jesus Christ to-day seeking to put the hands of his divided Church into his own wounded palm, and saying to all his followers, "Be ye friends: yonder are your enemies?"

Lift us, lift all thy Church, oh Lord, to this Mount of Vision, that we may see the

world and its needs, as thou seest them, and send it forth, a united and consecrated force, to minister to human need, and subdue this whole earth to thy glorious and beneficent reign!

HOW SHALL THE UNION OF CHRISTIANS COME ABOUT?

If our premises have been true in the preceding articles, and the unity of Christians is rendered certain by the operation of the law of life within the Church, and by the mighty motives from without which appeal to the inner law of life, the question still obtrudes itself, how is it to come about? Indeed, there are those who lay so much stress upon the *how* of Christian union that they become skeptical about the *fact,* because they do not understand all the process. When certain Christians of Paul's day asked, "How are the dead raised and with what manner of body do they come?" the apostle replied, with a little sharpness, "Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but the bare grain,

it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body even as it pleased him, and to each seed a body of its own."

There is an implication in this reply of the apostle that it is a very foolish thing for a Christian to doubt the possibility of God's carrying out his promises to us, or his purposes concerning us, because we can not see just how he will do it, or just what we shall be when he has done it. Would not the same great Christian philosopher, if he were on earth to-day, reply to the question which is so often raised, "How will Christian union come about, and what will the united Church be like?" in very much the same way? We, of course, know more about the process of Christian union than that of the resurrection, because the latter is wholly God's work, while in the matter of Christian union we are to co-operate with God. The things revealed to us, however, relate to what manner of Christians we are to be, how we may cultivate the spirit of unity, and in what essential elements Christian unity consists. There remains much left for faith, as to what changes God is going to lead his people

through in order to their unification, and the exact nature of the form which that union shall take. If, however, there be the unity of the Spirit, God will give it a body as it pleaseth him. But there can be no unity of body, or outward organization worth the having that does not result from unity of Spirit. The latter, therefore, is the matter of chief concern.

There are some things, however, that are reasonably sure concerning the nature of that union that shall be. We call attention to a few of these characteristics:

1. The union must be vital, not mechanical. It must grow; it can not be manufactured. There can be no union among Christ's followers except as they are united with him and share in his life and enter into fellowship with his plans and purposes. We may promote its growth by deepening the spiritual life and by removing obstacles out of the way; but we may not force it, or seek to hasten it beyond the law of spiritual development.

2. It must be *Christian* union. That is to say, Christ must be the center of it and the circumference of it. He must be supreme, and no man must divide authority

with him. A division in authority is certain to perpetuate existing divisions and may result in new ones. It is only by following a common master that we can have unity; and it is only by following Christ as that Master that we can have Christian unity. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ."

3. The union which Christ prayed for and which is essential to the world's conversion, is not the union of denominations, having differing creeds, tests of fellowship, party names and party ambitions. Federation is not Christian union, though we believe it is an important step in that direction. We owe it to the Christ who prayed for the unity of his followers, that in so far as we have attained to unity in faith and purpose and doctrine, we seek to manifest it to the world in such co-operation as that unity makes possible; but we must not mistake the co-operation of distinct denominational bodies for Christian union, as Jesus prayed for it.

4. It is safe to say that Christian union is not to come about by any one religious body absorbing all other religious bodies. No doubt that hope is cherished by many in

almost all the religious bodies of Christendom, but it is a hope destined never to be realized. Such a union would be both impracticable and undesirable. No religious body in Christendom is organized on a basis to adequately utilize and direct the religious forces of Christendom and administer wisely its vast interests. If history teaches anything, it teaches that this is not God's method of bringing about Christian union. No doubt he has a more excellent way which in time will commend itself to the approval of all his real followers. If we may judge from the history of the past what the divine plan of bringing about that unity of Christians is to be, it is their gradual approximation to a common divine standard, in which, as they come nearer to that standard, they necessarily come nearer to each other. That is the process which we see going on before our eyes and we have no right to suppose that any different plan is to be adopted. There will be a growing consciousness of the evils of division, which is only partially realized as yet; a growing sense of the need of unity, together with a clearer recognition among various religious bodies of the

truths they already hold in common. With the growth in Christian knowledge and in spiritual discernment there will come new estimates of spiritual values, and a readjustment of doctrinal conceptions more in harmony with the mind of Christ, which will open the way for continuous progress toward unity. Denominational peculiarities will shrink to their proper dimensions, while the great fundamentals of Christian faith and character will rise to their true places, and this will bring the whole body of believers into closer fellowship and cooperation. This process is to be mightily stimulated by the free intermingling of Christians and their working together for common ends.

5. Christian union, when it comes, will not be *uniformity*. There will be room in it for differences of opinion, different methods of work and worship, different forms of organization and different degrees of emphasis. No other sort of union is possible among a free people, nor would it be desirable. Life everywhere takes on a variety of forms, and it must be so in the kingdom of God. Nature furnishes us infinite variety, and yet underlying it all is

a wonderful unity. But we must get rid of the notion that this variety of opinions and freedom of action within the limitations of the spirit and teaching of Christ involves separate and distinct religious denominations. That idea belongs to the childhood period of the Church. We are coming more and more to understand that if we have the common faith that unites us to Christ, that makes us obedient to him, we may hold differences of opinion, and work and worship in different ways, without interfering with our oneness in Christ or our fellowship with each other. How far denominational lines will be obliterated, and present forms of organization modified, in order to the realization of New Testament unity, is a question which would be answered differently by persons occupying different points of view; but one thing, we think, may be said with assurance, and that is *that, in so far as our existing denominationalism interferes with the freest and fullest fellowship between Christians, and with their hearty co-operation in advancing the kingdom of God by the diversion of resources for purely sectarian purposes, or by confusing the minds of those without*

by our differing names and creeds, it must give way to that unity of faith and purpose, of spirit and life that subordinates everything else to the triumph of the kingdom of God on earth.

WHEN CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR UNITY IS FULFILLED.

It is not given to mortals to know with certainty the results of events which lie yet in the future. And yet in the light of reason and of revelation we may forecast, with reasonable certainty, some of the results which would follow the fulfillment of our Lord's prayer for the oneness of his followers. We shall undertake, in these concluding paragraphs, to state some of the probable results which would follow the realization of this much-to-be-desired consummation.

1. It would enrich every part of the now divided church by bringing all into the possession of a common inheritance of truth and of historic experience, which belongs to the several parts. No longer would men say, "I am of Luther," or "I am of Calvin," or "I am of Wesley," or "I am of Campbell," but all of us would realize that

"all things" are ours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or Luther or Calvin or Wesley or Campbell—all are ours and that we are Christ's and Christ is God's. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the value of this larger and better equipment which would come from each part of the Church sharing in the truth and experience of the whole Church. It would round out, and render more symmetrical, our uneven development, remedy, to a good degree at least, our religious lopsidedness, bring into use a great many neglected texts of Scripture, and give us a feeling of catholicity and breadth of fellowship which would mightily strengthen and quicken the zeal of the entire Church.

2. It would enrich every part of the Church in the wider circle of Christian fellowship and acquaintanceship. How our denominational barriers separate us from each other and make us strangers one to another! How many noble spirits there are in the religious bodies all about us, to come in contact with whom, in Christian fellowship and service, would be an inspiration to our lives! How comforting and strengthening would be the thought that

these pure and noble men and women are our brothers and sisters, fighting under the same banner with us and following the same Leader! How sectarianism has impoverished the Church by erecting unauthorized barriers between its members, and thus robbing each part of the intellectual and spiritual wealth which belongs to the entire body!

3. It would give a mighty and irresistible impulse to all the missionary movements of the Church. Freed from the task of building up denominational walls and carrying on a denominational propaganda, the united Church could devote itself, with singleness of aim and with concentrated power and resources, to the evangelization of the world. How our missionaries in foreign lands, and even in the outposts of our own country, would rejoice to know that the Church had healed its divisions and that they were all representatives of a united Church, and could work together as brothers without any sense of competition or denominational jealousy! How much more effective would their message be to the heathen world, if the foreign missionaries could say to pagan peoples, "We

all represent the one Church of Jesus Christ on earth, and all we ask of you is to become followers of the meek and lowly Nazarene." No longer would these heathen converts be confused by our denominational titles and tenets, nor discouraged by divisions among Christians the meaning of which they can not understand. A zeal for world-wide evangelization would sweep over the Church, and men and means would be furnished in abundance to supply the needs of pagan lands. How the heart of Christ would rejoice to see his Church rising at last to a conception of the magnitude and urgency of the great task he has laid upon it! Upon the Church thus awakened and thus undertaking in earnest at last the work which he has committed to it, he would pour out the fullness of his blessing and fulfill his ancient promise in a measure that we now little dream of—"Lo I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."

4. The influence of such a moral miracle as the reunion of a divided Church would be incalculable. It would stop the mouths of infidels and gainsayers. It would set at naught the wisdom of the agnostic. It would silence the scoffer and the religious

pessimist. It would remove the chief stumbling-block that is keeping thousands of thoughtful men and women out of the Church. It would prevent that pitiable and pathetic spectacle of divided families—husbands and wives, parents and children, belonging to different churches and separated from each other in the highest and most sacred things of life. It would unite thousands of weak churches, in small towns, now competing with each other, fill the prayer-meeting room with earnest and enthusiastic workers, where now only a few discouraged ones meet to lament the spiritual leanness of the Church, and all departments of the Church work would feel the thrill of a new life and new strength.

5. In the new strength, and enthusiasm born of union, the Church would resume its lost leadership in the great moral and social reforms of the times, and undertake, as it has never undertaken before, to heal many of our social ills, care more systematically and wisely for the poor and the needy, devote its attention to the rescue of the submerged part of the population of our great cities, concentrate its forces against the legalized saloon, gambling

houses and other demoralizing agencies, lend its influence to the settlement of disputes between labor and capital, put a check upon inordinate greed, and inculcate rational methods of living, safe forms of amusement, wiser methods of punishment, and whatever else relates to the moral and material welfare of the people. No more would it be said to the scandal of the Church that it is so engrossed with its theological dogmas and its ecclesiastical millinery and ritualism, as to be oblivious to the practical needs of suffering and toiling men and women all about them.

6. Engaged in the practical work of helping humanity, the Church would get closer to its Master, formalism would give place to real personal piety, and devotion to human good would absorb the energies erstwhile devoted to theological disputes and denominational strifes. Under this sort of *regime* the Church would recruit its ranks from a class of people who now stand aloof from its fellowship, and would receive from them the very kind of service which it would need to fit it for its new vocation.

7. The daily press of the world, together with all other forms of literature, would

give vastly more attention to religious subjects and to the great enterprises of the Church when once the Church has become a united body, working for the redemption of humanity. Every one knows that it is the spirit of jealousy among different denominations that keeps the press from giving as great publicity to religious gatherings and their actions as to other kinds of meetings in which all the people are interested. This aid of the press would be a powerful adjunct in carrying forward the interests of the kingdom.

8. Finally, who can doubt for a moment that there would be joy in the presence of God and among the angels of heaven and all celestial intelligences, over the blessed consummation of a united Church? The father-heart of God would thrill with joy to see all his children loving one another and working unitedly together to lift the world to a higher moral and spiritual level. The angels, who, we are told, rejoice "over one sinner that repenteth," so deeply are they interested in human affairs, would sing a new hallelujah chorus over a united Church, making possible the repentance of the whole world. That part of the Church

which has "crossed the flood" and is glorified, would join in the general jubilation. How deep and pure would be the joy of these redeemed saints, to see the Church militant close its divided ranks for a concerted movement to bring in the reign of the Church triumphant! We know what joy would thrill the hearts of tens of thousands of devout souls on earth who are praying, with their Master, that our sectarian divisions may be healed, and the Church become one in spirit, faith and obedience, if this splendid victory were achieved. A new note of triumph and optimism would enter into all our sermons, our songs, and our prayers, and we should begin to have here on earth a blessed foretaste of the fellowship of heaven. Surely an achievement that would bring joy to the heart of God, to the angels, and to all the good of earth, is worthy of our labors, our prayers, our sacrifices and our tears. That it will one day be realized, no more admits of doubt, as it seems to us, than the ultimate success of the divine purpose of God in sending Christ into the world. Indeed, these are not separate things, but parts of the same great purpose. He who

said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," will fulfill his mission. He is being "lifted up" to-day in sermon, in song, in art, in literature, in government, and in an advancing civilization, as never before. He is drawing all men unto himself as never before. He will yet draw his followers into unity, and the kingdoms of this world shall lay their honors at his feet!

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